

Cuvintele Domnului nostru Isus Cristos către mireasa sa aleasă și mult iubită explicând prea minunata întrupare, condamnând profanarea păgână și încălcarea credinței noastre și a botezului, și îndemnând preaiubita sa mireasă să îl iubească.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 1

Sunt Creatorul cerului și al pământului, unul în dumnezeire cu Tatăl și cu Duhul Sfânt. Eu sunt cel care a vorbit profeților și patriarhilor, cel pe care l-au așteptat. Pentru năzuința lor și în conformitate cu promisiunea mea, am luat trup fără de păcat, fără concupiscentă, intrând în trupul Fecioarei precum soarele luminează prin cel mai curat cristal. Soarele nu dăunează sticla intrând în ea, nici virginitatea Fecioarei nu a fost pierdută când am luat forma mea umană. Am luat trup omenesc fără să predau dumnezeirea mea.

Am fost nu mai puțin Dumnezeu, domnind și întregind toate lucrurile împreună cu Tatăl și cu Duhul Sfânt, deși eu, cu natura mea umană, eram în pântecul Fecioarei. Luminozitatea niciodată nu e separată de foc, nici divinitatea mea nu a fost vreodată separată de caracterul meu uman, nici măcar prin moarte. Apoi am voit ca trupul meu curat și fără de păcat să fie rănit din talpa picioarelor până în creștetul capului pentru păcatele tuturor oamenilor, și să fie atârnat pe Cruce. Este acum oferit în fiecare zi pe altar ca oamenii să mă iubească mai mult și să își amintească de bunăvoința mea mai des.

Acum, însă, sunt cu totul uitat, neglijat și disprețuit, ca un rege alungat afară din propriul său regat în locul său un hoț periculos fiind ales și cinstit. Am dorit ca regatul meu să fie înăuntrul omului, și pe drept eu să fiu rege și conducător peste el, întrucât l-am creat și l-am răscumpărat. Acum, însă, a călcat în picioare și a pângărit credința pe care mi-a promis-o la botez. A încălcat și a respins poruncile pe care i le-am dat. Iubește propria voință și cu dispreț refuză să mă asculte.

De asemenea, îl slăvește pe acel hoț netrebnic, diavolul, mai presus de mine și îi promite credința sa. Diavolul cu adevărat este un hoț întrucât, prin tentații rele și false promisiuni, fură pentru sine sufletul uman pe care eu l-am răscumpărat cu propriul meu Sânge. Nu pentru că este mai puternic, ca să spun așa, decât sunt eu, de este capabil să îl fure, întrucât sunt atât de puternic că pot înfăptui toate lucrurile printr-un singur cuvânt, și sunt atât de corect încât nu aș săvârși nici cea mai mică nedreptate, nici dacă toți sfinții m-ar ruga aceasta.

Totuși, deoarece omul, căruia i-a fost dată liberă alegere, de bună voie disprețuiește poruncile mele și își dă consimțământul diavolului, atunci nu este decât just ca el să simtă și tirania diavolului. Diavolul a fost creat bun de către mine dar a căzut prin propria sa voință neascultătoare și, ca să spun așa, a devenit slujitorul meu pentru pedepsirea nelegiuitorilor. Deși sunt acum atât de disprețuit, sunt totuși îndurător încât voi ierta păcatele oricui cere îndurarea mea și se smerește pe sine, și îi voi elibera de hoțul cel rău. Însă voi folosi judecata mea asupra celor care se încăpățânează să mă sfideze, și auzind-o vor tremura iar cei care trec prin ea vor spune: ‘Vai, că am fost vreodată născuți sau concepuți, vai, că am provocat vreodată pe Domnul Măririi la furie!’

Însă tu, fiica mea, pe care am ales-o pentru mine și cu care vorbesc în spirit, iubește-mă din toată inima, nu precum îți iubești fiul sau fiica sau rudele dar mai mult decât orice în lume! Eu te-am creat și nu am cruțat nici unul din membrele mele suferind pentru tine. Și totuși iubesc sufletul tău atât de mult încât, dacă ar fi posibil, m-aș lăsa răstignit din nou decât să te pierd. Urmează exemplul

smereniei mele: Eu, care sunt Rege al gloriei și al îngerilor, am fost îmbrăcat în zdrențe modeste și am stat gol la stâlp în timp ce urechile mele auzeau tot felul de insulte și batjocuri. Dă întâietate voinței mele în fața voinței tale, cum Mama mea, Doamna ta, de la început până la sfârșit, nu a dorit vreodată altceva decât ce am voit eu. Dacă faci aceasta, atunci inima ta va fi cu inima mea, și va fi înflăcărată cu dragostea mea în același fel cum orice lucru uscat este cu ușurință aprins de foc.

Sufletul tău va fi plin de mine iar eu voi fi în tine, și toate lucrurile trecătoare vor deveni amare ție și toate poftele carnale precum otrava. Te vei odihni în brațele mele dumnezeiești, unde nu este nici o poftă trupească, doar bucurie și plăcere spirituală. Acolo sufletul, atât în interior cât și în exterior fericit, este plin de bucurie, gândindu-se și dorind nimic altceva decât fericirea pe care o posedă. Așadar iubește-mă mai presus de toate, și vei avea toate lucrurile pe care ți le dorești, și le vei avea din belșug. Nu este oare scris că untdelemnul văduvei nu s-a sfârșit până ce Domnul a trimis ploaie pe pământ conform spuselor profetului? Eu sunt profetul adevărat. Dacă vei crede cuvintele mele și le vei împlini, untdelemnul și bucuria și veselia nu te vor părăsi pentru toata veșnicia.

Cuvintele Domnului nostru Isus Cristos către fiica pe care a luat-o ca mireasă(spirituală) cu privire la articolele adevăratei credințe, și despre ce podoabe, simboluri și intenții mireasa ar trebui să aibă cu privire la mire.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 2

Eu sunt Creatorul cerurilor, a pământului, și a mării și a tot ce se află în ele. Sunt una cu Tatăl și cu Duhul Sfânt, nu precum zeii de piatră sau de aur, cum spuneau oamenii cândva, și nu mai mulți zei, precum oamenii obișnuiau să creadă atunci, ci un singur Dumnezeu, Tatăl, Fiul, și Duhul Sfânt, trei persoane însă una în esență, Creatorul a toate dar creat de nimic, rămânând neschimbător și atotputernic, fără început sau sfârșit. Eu sunt cel care a fost născut din Fecioară, fără să îmi pierd dumnezeirea dar unind-o firii mele omenești, astfel ca într-o singură persoană să fiu adevăratul Fiu al lui Dumnezeu și Fiu al Fecioarei. Eu sunt cel care a atârnat pe Cruce, a murit și a fost îngropat; cu toate acestea dumnezeirea mea a rămas intactă.

Deși am murit prin natura umană și trupul pe care eu, unicul Fiu, l-am luat, totuși am trăit în natura divină în care eram un singur Dumnezeu împreună cu Tatăl și cu Duhul Sfânt. Sunt același om care a înviat din morți și s-a urcat la cer și care acum vorbesc cu tine prin duhul meu. Te-am ales pe tine și te-am primit ca mireasă a mea cu scopul de a-ți arăta secretele mele, pentru că mă mulțumește să fac astfel. De asemenea am un anumit drept echitabil asupra ta, întrucât ai abandonat voința ta mie când soțul tău a murit. După moartea sa, te-ai gândit și te-ai rugat cu privire la faptul că vei deveni săracă de dragul meu, și ai vrut să lași toate de dragul meu. Așadar am un drept echitabil asupra ta. În schimbul acestei mari iubiri pe care o ai, nu este decât convenit ca eu să am grija de tine. De aceea te primesc ca mireasă a mea pentru propria-mi mulțumire, genul care este adecvat pentru Dumnezeu să aibă cu un suflet cast.

Este îndatorirea miresei să fie pregătită când mirele decide să facă nunta, pentru ca să poată fi îmbrăcată și îngrijită cum se cuvine. Vei fi curată dacă gândurile tale sunt mereu la păcatele tale, la cum prin botez te-am curățat de păcatul lui Adam și cât de des te-am sprijinit și te-am susținut când ai căzut în păcat. De asemeni mireasa ar trebui să poarte semnul mirelui la pieptul ei, adică, ar trebui să porți în minte favorile și binefacerile pe care ți le-am făcut, de pildă cât de nobil te-am creat dându-ți trup și suflet, cât de nobil te-am împodobit oferindu-ți sănătate și bunuri temporale, cu câtă bunăvoință te-am salvat când am murit pentru tine și ți-am restituit partea ta de moștenire ție, dacă dorești să o ai. Mireasa ar trebui de asemeni să facă voința mirelui ei. Care este voința mea decât aceea ca să vrei să mă iubești mai presus de orice și să dorești nimic în afară de mine?

Am creat toate lucrurile de dragul omenirii și am pus toate lucrurile sub ei. Și totuși ei iubesc totul în afară de mine și urăsc nimic în afară de mine. Am cumpărat înapoi moștenirea lor pentru ei, pe care o pierduseră, dar au devenit atât de înstrăinați și s-au îndepărtat atât de mult de rațiune încât, în locul gloriei eterne în care se află bine ce nu contenește, ar prefera să aibă glorie trecătoare ce este precum pulverizarea oceanului care se înalță pentru un moment ca un munte apoi cu repeziciune se scufundă în nimic. Mireasa mea, dacă nu dorești nimic în afară de mine, dacă sfidezi toate lucrurile de dragul meu, copii și rude precum și avere sau onoruri – eu îți voi da o preaminunată și valoroasă răsplată.

Nu vei primi de la mine nici aur sau argint ca parte de beneficiu ci pe mine ca al tău mire, eu, care sunt Regele Măririi. Dacă îți este rușine să fii săracă și disprețuită, gândește-te cum Dumnezeuul tău a umblat înaintea ta, odată ce slujitorii și prietenii l-au abandonat pe pământ, întrucât nu căutam prieteni pe pământ ci prieteni în Cer. Dacă te îngrijorezi și te sperii să fii împovărată de muncă și boală, atunci gândește-te cât de cumplit lucru este să arzi în foc! Ce ai fi meritat dacă ai fi ofensat vreun superior lumesc cum ai făcut cu mine? Căci, deși te iubesc din toată inima, cu toate acestea nu acționez împotriva dreptății, nici măcar într-un singur detaliu.

La fel cum ai păcătuit în toate măduarele tale, la fel trebuie să faci ispășire în fiecare mădular. Cu toate acestea, datorită voinței tale bune și hotărârii de a te îmbunătăți, îți înlocuiesc sentința cu una a îndurării și micșorez pedeapsa mai grea în schimbul unei cantități mici de reparație. Din acest motiv, îmbrățișează micile tale greutăți cu seninătate pentru ca să poți fi curățită și să accesezi minunata ta răsplată cât mai curând! Este de folos ca mireasa să ostenească trudind alături de mire pentru ca să poată cu atât mai mult încrezătoare să-și primească odihna împreună cu el.

Cuvintele Domnului nostru Isus Cristos către mireasa sa cu privire la formarea ei în iubire și virtute față de el, mirele, despre ura păcătoșilor pentru Dumnezeu, și despre dragostea de lume.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 3

Sunt Domnul și Dumnezeuul tău, cel pe care îl adori. Eu sunt cel care a menținut cerul și pământul prin puterea mea. Nu sunt menținute de nimic altceva și nici nu au alte suporturi. Eu sunt cel care sunt oferit în fiecare zi pe altar, Dumnezeu adevărat și om adevărat, sub aspectul pâinii. Sunt același care te-a ales. Cinstește pe Tatăl meu! Iubește-mă! Ascultă de Duhul meu! Respectă pe Mama mea ca Maică a ta! Onorează toți sfinții mei! Păstrează adevărata credință învățată ție de către cineva care a trăit în el însuși conflictul dintre cele două duhuri, duhul falsității și Duhul Adevărului, iar cu ajutorul meu cucerit.

Păstrează adevărata smerenie! Ce este adevărata smerenie dacă nu să oferi laudă lui Dumnezeu pentru lucrurile bune pe care ni le-a dat? În prezent, totuși, sunt mulți oameni care mă urăsc și care consideră faptele mele și cuvintele mele ca fiind supărătoare și fără conținut. Ei întâmpină cu bucurie adulterul, pe diavol, cu brațele larg deschise, și îl iubesc. Orice ei fac pentru mine, fac cu nemulțumire și resentiment. Nici măcar nu ar mărturisi numele meu, dacă nu le-ar fi frică de părerea altora.

Au o dragoste atât de deschisă pentru lume încât nu obosesc niciodată să muncească pentru ea noapte și zi, și sunt mereu înflăcărați în dragostea ce i-o poartă. Munca lor îmi este la fel de plăcută ca și când cineva ar da dușmanului său bani ca să omoare pe fiul său. Asta fac ei. Îmi aduc câteva milostenii și mă cinstesc cu buzele lor cu scopul de a obține succes lumesc și să rămână în privilegiile lor și în păcatele lor. Duhul cel bun este astfel împiedicat în ei să facă orice progres în virtute.

Dacă vrei să mă iubești din toată inima și să dorești nimic în afară de mine, te voi atrage la mine prin caritate, la fel cum un magnet sau un magnetit atrage fierul. Te voi așeza pe brațul meu, care e atât de puternic încât nimeni nu îl poate întinde și atât de rigid încât nimeni nu îl poate îndoi odată ce e întins. Este atât de parfumat încât întrece orice mireasmă și nu poate fi comparat cu desfătările acestei lumi.

EXPLICAȚIE

Acesta era un om sfânt, un profesor de teologie, care se numea Învățătorul Mathias de Suedia, un canonic de Linköping. A scris un excelent comentariu acoperind întreaga Biblie. A suferit ispite foarte subtile din partea diavolului cu privire la un număr de erezii împotriva credinței Catolice, pe toate biruindu-le cu ajutorul lui Cristos, și nu a putut fi biruit de către diavol. Aceasta este în mod clar specificat în biografia Brigittei. Este Învățătorul Mathias cel care a scris Prologul la aceste cărți, care începe cu Stupor et mirabilia, etc. Era un om sfânt și puternic spiritual în cuvânt și faptă.

Când a murit în Suedia, aleasa lui Cristos, atunci trăind în Roma, a auzit în rugăciunea sa o voce care îi spunea în spirit: “Fericit ești tu, Învățătorule Mathias, pentru coroana care a fost făcută pentru tine în Cer. Vino acum la înțelepciunea care nu se sfârșește!” Se poate citi despre el și în Volumul I capitolul 52; Volumul V, în răspunsul la întrebarea 3 din ultima interogație; și Volumul VI capitolele 75 și 89.

Cuvintele Domnului nostru Isus Cristos către mireasa sa cu privire la faptul că nu ar trebui să se îngrijoreze sau să gândească, că, aceste lucruri revelate ei ar putea veni de la un duh rău, și despre cum să deosebească un duh bun sau un duh rău.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 4

Sunt Creatorul și Răscumpărătorul tău. De ce te temi de cuvintele mele? De ce te întrebaai dacă au venit de la un duh bun sau de la unul rău? Spune-mi, ai găsit vreun lucru în cuvintele mele pe care conștiința ta nu ți-a dictat să faci? Sau ți-am poruncit să faci vreun lucru împotriva rațiunii?” La acestea mireasa a răspuns: “Nu, dimpotrivă, toate sunt adevărate și am înțeles greșit.” Duhul, sau mirele, a răspuns: “Ți-am poruncit trei lucruri. Din acestea puteai să recunoști Duhul cel bun. Ți-am poruncit să îl cinstești pe Dumnezeuul tău, care te-a creat și ți-a dat toate lucrurile pe care le ai.

Rațiunea ta îți spune pe lângă asta să îl cinstești mai presus de toate. Ți-am poruncit să păstrezi adevărata credință, adică, să crezi în faptul că nimic nu a fost făcut fără Dumnezeu și că nimic nu poate fi făcut fără Dumnezeu. De asemenea ți-am poruncit să aspiři la o cumpătare rezonabilă în toate lucrurile, întrucât lumea a fost făcută pentru uzul uman pentru ca oamenii să o folosească în nevoile lor. În același mod, poți să recunoști și spiritul necurat din trei lucruri, opusul acestora. Te ispitește să cauți propria ta laudă și să fii mândru de lucrurile date ție. Te ispitește să îți trădezi credința. De asemenea te ispitește spre desfrâu în tot trupul tău și în toate, și îți face inima să ardă pentru el.

Câteodată amăgește oamenii și sub pretextul binelui. Pentru aceasta ți-am poruncit să îți analizezi mereu conștiința și să o descoperi unor chibzuiri povătuitori spirituali. De aceea, nu te îndoi că Duhul bun al lui Dumnezeu este cu tine, văzând că dorești nimic altceva decât Dumnezeu și ești complet înflăcărată cu dragostea Sa. Eu sunt singurul care poate face aceasta. Este imposibil pentru diavol să se apropie de tine.

Nici nu este posibil pentru el să se apropie de oamenii răi în vreun fel decât dacă eu permit aceasta, fie din cauza păcatelor lor sau din cauza unei decizii ascunse cunoscută mie, căci el este creatura mea, la fel ca și celelalte, și a fost creat bun de către mine, deși a devenit rău prin propria sa ură. Eu

sunt Domn asupra lui. Din acest motiv, mă acuză pe nedrept cei care spun că oamenii care mă slujesc cu mare devoțiune sunt nebuni și au un diavol.

Ei mă descriu asemenea unui om care își expune soția sa castă și încrezătoare unui bărbat adulter. Astfel aș fi dacă aș lăsa pe cineva care a fost drept și plin de iubire față de mine să fie predat unui demon. Dar pentru că sunt corect, nici un demon nu va deține vreodată controlul asupra sufletului vreunui dintre slujitorii mei devotați.

Deși prietenii mei câteodată par să fie aproape ieșiți din minți, aceasta nu e pentru că ar suferi din cauza diavolului sau pentru că mă slujesc cu devoțiune ferventă. Se datorează mai degrabă vreunui defect al creierului sau vreunei cauze ascunse, ce servește să îi smerească. Uneori se poate deasemeni întâmpla ca diavolul să primească putere de la mine asupra trupurilor oamenilor buni pentru mai marea lor răsplată sau că le întunecă conștiințele. Însă, niciodată nu poate să preia controlul asupra sufletelor acelora care se încred în mine și se bucură în mine.

Cuvintele iubitoare ale lui Cristos către mireasa sa conținând minunata imagine a unui castel nobil, ce simbolizează militanții Bisericii, și despre cum Biserica lui Dumnezeu va fi reconstruită prin rugăciunile glorioasei Fecioare și a sfinților.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 5

Eu sunt Creatorul a toate. Sunt Rege al gloriei și Domnul îngerilor. Am construit pentru mine un castel nobil și am așezat aleșii mei în el. Dușmanii mei i-au subminat fundațiile și i-au copleșit pe prietenii mei atât de mult astfel încât chiar măduva iese din picioarele prietenilor mei în timp ce ei stau ținându-și de lemnul butucilor. Gura lor este învinețită de pietre, iar ei sunt torturați de foame și sete. De asemenea, dușmanii îl persecută pe Domnul lor. Prietenii mei acum imploră și geamătă pentru ajutor; dreptatea strigă pentru răzbunare, însă îndurarea cere să ierți.

Apoi Dumnezeu a vorbit către oștirea cerească, care, stătea alături: “Ce credeți cu privire la acești oameni care mi-au sechestrat castelul?” Toți au răspuns într-un singur glas: “Doamne, toată dreptatea este în tine și în tine vedem toate lucrurile. Toată judecata a fost dată ție, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, care viețuiește fără început sau sfârșit, tu ești judecătorul lor.” Și a spus: “Deși cunoașteți și vedeți toate lucrurile în mine, totuși pentru binele miresei mele aici, spuneți-mi care este sentința corectă.” Au răspuns: “Aceasta este drept: ca aceia care au subminat zidul să fie pedepsiți ca hoți, ca aceia care persistă în rău să fie pedepsiți ca uzurpatori, și ca cei captivi să fie eliberați iar cei înfometați să fie săturați.”

Apoi a vorbit Maria, Maica lui Dumnezeu, care păstrase tăcerea în timpul primului schimb, și a spus: “Domnul meu și preaiubitul meu Fiul, ai fost în pânțele mele ca Dumnezeu adevărat și om adevărat. Ai binevoit să mă sfințești pe mine care eram un vas pământesc. Te implor: fie-ți milă de ei încă o dată!” Domnul a răspuns Mamei sale: “Binecuvântat să fie cuvântul gurii tale! Ca o mireasmă dulce se ridică la Dumnezeu. Tu esti gloria și Regina îngerilor și a sfinților, întrucât Dumnezeu a fost consolată prin tine și toți sfinții înveseliți. Și pentru că voința ta a fost precum a mea de la începutul tinereții tale, voi face încă o dată precum dorești.” Apoi a spus către oștirea cerească: “Pentru că ați luptat vitejește, de dragul iubirii voastre voi lăsa să fiu împăcat pentru acum. Iată, voi reconstrui zidul meu datorită rugăciunilor voastre.

Îi voi salva și vindeca pe aceia care au fost oprimați prin forță și îi voi plăti însutit pentru abuzul pe care l-au suferit. Dacă făcătorii de violență vor cere îndurare, pacea și îndurarea va fi a lor. Cei care o disprețuiesc vor simți dreptatea mea.” Apoi a spus către mireasa sa: “Mireasa mea, te-am ales și te-am îmbrăcat în duhul meu. Tu auzi cuvintele mele și cele ale sfinților mei care, deși văd toate

lucrurile în mine, totuși au vorbit spre binele tău, ca tu să poți înțelege.

La urma urmei, tu, care încă te afli în trup, nu poți vedea în mine în același mod ca ei care sunt spirite. Îți voi arăta acum ce semnifică aceste lucruri. Castelul despre care am vorbit este Sfânta Biserică, pe care am clădit-o cu propriul meu Sânge și cu cel al sfinților. Am cimentat-o prin caritatea mea iar apoi am așezat aleșii mei și prietenii în ea. Fundația sa este credința, adică, convingerea că sunt un judecător drept și îndurător.

Fundația a fost acum subminată deoarece toți cred și predică despre mine că sunt îndurător însă aproape nimeni nu crede că sunt un judecător corect. Mă consideră un judecător imoral. Un judecător ar fi întradevăr imoral dacă, din clemență, ar lăsa pe cei răi să fie nepedepsiți astfel încât să oprime în continuare pe cei drepti. Eu, totuși, sunt un judecător drept și îndurător și nu voi lăsa nici cel mai mic păcat să rămână nepedepsit nici cel mai neînsemnat bine să rămână fără răsplată.

Prin subminarea acestui zid, au intrat în Sfânta Biserică oameni ce păcătuiesc fără teamă, ce neagă că sunt drept și chinuie pe prietenii mei ca și cum i-ar fi sleit în butuci. Nici o bucurie sau consolare nu este dată acestor prieteni ai mei. În schimb ei sunt pedepsiți și insultați ca și cum ar fi posedați diabolic. Când vorbesc adevărul despre mine, sunt reduși la tăcere și acuzați că mint. Sunt însetați cu o pasiune să audă sau să vorbească adevărul, dar nu se găsește nimeni care să îi asculte sau să le vorbească adevărul.

Pe deasupra, eu, Dumnezeu Creatorul, sunt hulit. Căci oamenii spun: ‘Nu știm dacă Dumnezeu există. Și dacă există, nu ne pasă.’ Ei aruncă banderiuța mea la pământ și îl calcă în picioare, spunând: ‘De ce a suferit? Ce bine ne aduce nouă? Dacă ne-ar îndeplini dorința noastră, vom fi mulțumiți – nu are decât să își păstreze regatul și cerul lui!’ Vreau să pătrund înăuntrul lor, dar ei spun: ‘Mai degrabă murim decât să ne lepădăm de voința noastră!’ Mireasa mea, privește ce fel de oameni sunt aceștia! Eu i-am creat și îi pot distruge cu un singur cuvânt. Cât de insolenți sunt față de mine! Mulțumită rugăciunilor Mamei mele și a tuturor sfinților, rămân îndurător și răbdător îndeajuns încât acum sunt dispus să le trimit cuvintele gurii mele și să le ofer îndurarea mea.

Dacă vor să o accepte, voi fi împăcat. În caz contrar vor cunoaște dreptatea mea și, precum hoții, vor fi făcuți de rușine public în fața îngerilor și a oamenilor și vor fi condamnați de fiecare dintre aceștia. Așa cum criminalii atârnavă pe spânzuratorile în formă de furcă și erau devorați de corbi, ei vor fi devorați de demoni însă nu vor fi consumați.

La fel cum oamenii condamnați la butuci nu au odihnă, ei vor găsi durere și amărăciune pe toate părțile. Un râu opărit va curge în gurile lor însă burțile nu li se vor umple, și vor fi reînnoiți pentru pedeapsa lor în fiecare zi. Însă prietenii mei vor fi în siguranță, și vor fi consolați de cuvintele care vin din gura mea. Vor vedea dreptatea mea împreună cu îndurarea mea. Îi voi îmbrăca în armele iubiri mele și îi voi face atât de puternici încât adversarii credinței vor aluneca înapoi precum noroiul. Când vor vedea a mea dreptate, vor sta în rușine veșnică pentru că au abuzat de răbdarea mea.”

Cuvintele lui Cristos către mireasa sa despre cum Duhul său nu poate locui în cei răi, și despre separarea celor răi de cei buni, și trimiterea oamenilor buni înarmați cu arme spirituale la război împotriva lumii.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 6

Dușmanii mei sunt precum cei mai sălbatici dintre bestiile care nu se pot câtuși de puțin sătura sau odihni. Inima lor este atât de goală de dragostea mea încât gândul despre Pătimirea mea nu intră

niciodată în ea. Nici măcar odată din centrul inimilor lor nu a ieșit un cuvânt asemenea acestora: “Doamne, tu ne-ai răscumpărat, fii lăudat pentru amara ta patimă!” Cum poate Duhul meu să locuiască în oameni care nu au dragoste divină pentru mine, oameni care sunt dornici să trădeze pe alții pentru a-și îndeplini propria voință? Inima lor este plină de viermi dezgustători, adică, plină de porniri lumești. Diavolul și-a lăsat bălegarul în gurile lor; de aceea nu au simpatie pentru cuvintele mele. Și astfel cu ferăstrăul meu îi voi despărți de prietenii mei. Nu există cale mai rea pentru a muri decât să mori sub ferăstrău. La fel, nu este pedeapsă pe care nu o vor împărți: vor fi tăiați în două cu ferăstrăul de către diavol și separați de la mine. Îi găsesc atât de odioși încât toți aderenții lor vor fi de asemenea despărțiți de la mine.

Din acest motiv trimit ai mei prieteni ca să separe diavolii de membrii mei, de vreme ce diavolii sunt adevărații mei dușmani. Îi trimit precum soldați cavaleri la război. Oricine își mortifică trupul și se abține de la lucruri interzise este adevăratul meu soldat. Ca sulică vor avea cuvintele gurii mele iar în mâinile lor sabia credinței; pe piepturile lor va fi platoșa iubirii astfel că orice s-ar întâmpla iubirea lor pentru mine nu va scădea. Trebuie să aibă lângă ei scutul răbdării pentru ca să suporte toate lucrurile cu îngăduință.

I-am pus precum aurul într-un cufăr: de acum vor trebui să iasă și să meargă pe căile mele. Conform cu planul dreptății, eu nu am putut intra în gloria majestății mele fără să îndur durerea în natura mea umană. Deci ei cum vor intra? Dacă Domnul lor a suferit, nu este surprinzător ca ei de asemenea să trebuiască să sufere. Dacă Domnul lor a suportat biciul, nu este lucru mai mare ca ei să suporte cuvinte. Nu trebuie să le fie teamă căci nu îi voi abandona vreodată. La fel cum este imposibil pentru diavol să ajungă la Inima lui Dumnezeu și să o despartă, la fel este imposibil pentru diavol să îi separe pe ei de la Mine. Și de vreme ce, în ochii mei, ei sunt precum cel mai curat aur, cu toate că vor fi testați puțină vreme cu foc, Eu nu îi voi abandona: este pentru mai marea lor răsplată.

Cuvintele minunatei Fecioare către fiica sa despre modul de a se îmbrăca și felul de haine și ornamente cu care fiica ar trebui să se împodobească și să se îmbrace.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 7

Sunt Maria care am născut pe Fiul lui Dumnezeu, Dumnezeu adevărat și om adevărat. Sunt Regina îngerilor. Fiul meu te iubește cu toată Inima Sa. Așadar iubește-L! Se cade să fii îmbodobită cu cele mai curate dintre haine iar eu îți voi arăta cum și ce fel de haine ele trebuie să fie. Cum înainte aveai un neglijeu, apoi un corsaj, pantofi, o pelerină, și o broșă pe piept, la fel acum ar trebui să ai haine spirituale. Neglijoul este pocăința. Cum neglijoul este purtat cel mai aproape de trup, la fel pocăința și spovedania sunt prima modalitate de conversiune către Dumnezeu.

Prin ea mintea, care cândva găsea plăcerea în păcat, este purificată iar trupul indecent este ținut sub control. Cei doi pantofi sunt două dispoziții, anume intenția de a îndrepta păcatele trecute și intenția de a face binele și de a sta departe de rău. Corsajul tău este speranța în Dumnezeu. La fel cum un corsaj are două mâneci, fie ca ambele dreptatea și mila să fie în speranța ta. În acest fel vei nădăjdui pentru îndurarea lui Dumnezeu pentru că nu îi neglijezi dreptatea sa.

Gândește-te la dreptatea și judecata Lui într-un asemenea mod încât să nu uiți de îndurarea pe care o are, căci El nu aplică dreptatea fără îndurare sau îndurarea fără dreptate. Pelerina este credința. Cum pelerina acoperă totul și totul este împrejmuț în ea, natura umană poate în același mod să priceapă și să realizeze totul prin credință. Această pelerină ar trebui să fie decorată cu semnele iubirii mirelui tău, adică, modul în care te-a creat, modul în care te-a răscumpărat, modul în care te-a încurajat și te-a adus în Duhul Său și ți-a deschis ochii spirituali.

Broșa este considerația pentru Patimile sale. Fixează-ți ferm în pieptul tău gândul cum a fost batjocorit și chinuit, cum a stat viu pe Cruce, sângerând și străpuns în toate tendoanele, cum la moartea sa întregul său trup a fost zdruncinat din cauza durerii acute a patimilor, cum și-a încredințat duhul în mâinile Tatălui. Fie ca această broșă să fie mereu pe pieptul tău! Pe capul tău să fie așezată o coroană, ma refer la, castitatea în afecțiunile tale, făcându-te să înduri mai degrabă biciuirea decât să fii mai departe pătată. Să fii modestă și demnă! Nu te gândi la nimic altceva, nu dori nimic altceva decât Dumnezeu și Creatorul tău. Când îl ai pe El, ai totul. Împodobită în acest fel, îți vei aștepta mirele.

Cuvintele Reginei Cerului către iubita sa fiică învățând-o cum ar trebui să iubească și să preamărească pe Fiul ei împreună cu Maica Sa.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 8

Sunt Regina Cerului. Erai neliniștită despre cum ar trebui să mă preamărești. Să știi sigur că toate laudele date Fiului meu sunt laude și pentru mine. Iar cei care îl dezonoarează pe El, mă dezonoarează și pe mine, întrucât iubirea mea pentru El și a Sa pentru mine a fost atât de înflăcărată încât amândoi am fost precum o singură inimă. Atât de mult m-a privilegiat pe mine, care eram un vas pământesc, încât m-a înălțat mai presus de toți îngerii. Pentru aceasta, ar trebui să mă preamărești astfel: “Binecuvântat ești tu, Doamne, Creatorul a toate, care ai binevoit să cobori în pânțele Fecioarei Maria. Binecuvântat ești tu, Doamne, care ai voit să fii înăuntrul Fecioarei Maria fără ca să fii o povară pentru ea și ai binevoit să primești trup imaculat de la ea fără păcat.

Binecuvântat esti tu, Doamne, care ai venit la Fecioară, dând bucurie sufletului său și întregului său trup, și care ai ieșit din ea spre bucuria fără de păcat a întregului ei trup. Binecuvântat ești tu, Doamne, care după înălțarea ta ai înveselit pe Fecioara Maria Maica Ta cu frecvente consolări și ai vizitat-o pe ea cu alinarea ta. Binecuvântat ești tu, Doamne, care ai ridicat trupul și sufletul Fecioarei Maria, Maica Ta, la Cer și ai onorat-o pe ea așezând-o lângă divinitatea ta deasupra tuturor îngerilor. Fie-ți milă de mine datorită rugăciunilor ei!

Cuvintele Reginei Cerului către iubita sa fiică cu privire la minunata dragoste pe care Fiul a avut-o pentru Neprihănită Sa Mamă, despre cum Maica lui Cristos a fost concepută într-o căsătorie castă și sfințită în pânțele mamei, despre cum a fost luată cu trupul și cu sufletul în Cer, despre puterea numelui ei și despre îngerii repartizați oamenilor pentru bine sau rău.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 9

Sunt Regina Cerului. Iubește pe Fiul Meu căci este cât se poate de meritos; când îl ai pe El, ai tot ceea ce este de valoare. Este cât se poate de dezirabil; când îl ai pe El, ai tot ceea ce este de dorit. Iubește-L, de asemenea, căci este cât se poate de virtuos; când îl ai pe El ai toate virtuțile. Îți voi spune cât de minunată a fost dragostea Sa pentru al meu trup și suflet și cât de multă onoare a dat numelui meu. El, Fiul meu, m-a iubit înainte ca eu să-L iubesc, căci este Creatorul meu. I-a unit pe tatăl și mama mea într-o căsătorie atât de castă încât nu se găsea atunci un cuplu mai cast. Ei niciodată nu au dorit să se unească decât în conformitate cu Legea, doar de dragul procreării. Când un înger i-a anunțat că vor da naștere Fecioarei din care Salvarea lumii va veni, ei ar fi preferat să moară decât să se unească în dragoste carnală; pofta trupească murise în ei.

Dar, te asigur, din blândețe divină și din pricina mesajului îngerului ei s-au unit în trup, nu din lascivitate dar împotriva voinței lor și din iubire pentru Dumnezeu. În acest mod trupul meu a fost pus laolaltă din sămânța lor prin dragoste divină. Când trupul meu a fost format, Dumnezeu a trimis

în el sufletul creat din divinitatea Sa; sufletul a fost imediat sfințit împreună cu trupul, iar îngerii au vegheat și l-au îngrijit zi și noapte. Este imposibil să îți spun ce mare bucurie a venit asupra mamei mele atunci când sufletul meu a fost sfințit și unit cu trupul. După aceea, când durata vieții mele s-a sfârșit, întâi mi-a înălțat sufletul, ca fiind învățător a trupului, într-un loc mai remarcabil decât celelalte alături de gloria divinității Sale, iar apoi trupul meu, astfel că nici un alt trup al vreunei creaturi nu este atât de aproape de Dumnezeu precum este al meu.

Înțelege cât de mult Fiul meu a iubit sufletul și trupul meu! Sunt unii oameni, totuși, care răutăcios neagă că am fost înălțată trup și suflet, iar alții care pur și simplu nu pricep. Însă adevărul este sigur: am fost luată în gloria lui Dumnezeu cu trup și suflet. Ascultă cât de mult Fiul meu a distins numele meu! Numele meu este Maria, precum spune Evanghelia. Când îngerii aud acest nume, se bucură în înțelegerea lor și aduc mulțumiri lui Dumnezeu pentru că a lucrat un așa mare har prin mine și cu mine, și pentru că văd firea omenească a Fiului Meu glorificată în divinitatea Sa. Sufletele din purgator se înveselesc peste măsură, la fel cum un om bolnav o face atunci când zăcând în pat aude un cuvânt de alinare din partea altora și îi încântă inima făcându-l brusc fericit.

La auzul numelui meu, îngerii buni se apropie imediat și mai mult de sufletele drepte la care au fost dați drept păzitori și se înveselesc pentru progresul lor. Îngerii buni au fost dați tuturor spre protecție iar îngerii răi ca test. Nu se întâmplă ca îngerii să fie separați vreodată de Dumnezeu, dar, mai degrabă, ei asistă sufletul fără să părăsească pe Dumnezeu și rămân constant în prezența Sa în timp ce mereu stârnesc și înclină sufletul să facă binele. Demonii toți se înspăimântă și se tem de acest nume. La auzul numelui de Maria, imediat lasă sufletul să iasă din strânsoarea lor. Așa cum o pasăre cu ghearele și ciocul pe prada sa pleacă de cum aude vreun sunet, însă se întoarce când nu vede că se întâmplă nimic după, la fel și demonii dau drumul unui suflet, temători la auzul numelui meu, însă zboară și se întorc la el iute ca o săgeată, dacă nu văd vreo îmbunătățire după.

Nu este nimeni atât de rece în dragostea pentru Dumnezeu – în afară de cazul vreo unuia dintre cei condamnați – de la care diavolul să nu se depărteze imediat dacă invocă numele meu cu intenția de a nu se mai întoarce vreodată la obiceiurile sale rele, iar diavolul stă departe de el în afară de cazul în care își reia intenția de a face păcate de moarte. Totuși, uneori diavolului îi este permis să îl tulbure spre mai marea sa răsplată, însă niciodată ca să îl posede.

Cuvintele Fecioarei Maria către fiica sa, oferind o învățătură folositoare despre cum trebuie să trăiască, și descriind multe detalii minunate despre Patimile lui Cristos.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 10

Sunt Regina Cerului, Maica lui Dumnezeu. Ți-am spus că ar trebui să porți o broșă pe pieptul tău. Îți voi arăta acum mai pe larg cum, de la început, când am învățat prima oară și am ajuns la înțelegerea existenței lui Dumnezeu, am fost mereu preocupată despre mântuirea mea și respectarea religioasă. Când am învățat mai în întregime că însuși Dumnezeu era Creatorul meu și Judecătorul tuturor faptelor mele, am ajuns să îl iubesc profund, și am fost mereu atentă și precaută ca nu cumva să Îl jignesc în cuvânt sau faptă. Când am învățat că El dăduse poruncile și legea Sa poporului Său, și a înfăptuit atât de multe miracole prin ei, am făcut o hotărâre fermă în sufletul meu ca să iubesc nimic în afară de El, iar lucrurile lumești au devenit cu totul respingătoare pentru mine.

Apoi, învățând că însuși Dumnezeu avea să răscumpere lumea și să se nască dintr-o Fecioară, am fost atât de învăluită de dragoste pentru El încât nu mă gândeam la nimic în afară de Dumnezeu și nu doream nimic în afară de El. Pe cât posibil, m-am retras de la conversație și de lângă prezența părinților și a prietenilor, dând tot ceea ce îmi aparține pentru a ajuta pe cei nevoiași. Am păstrat pentru mine doar mâncare săracăcioasă și îmbrăcăminte.

Nimic în afară de Dumnezeu nu era plăcut pentru mine. Am sperat mereu în inima mea să trăiesc până la timpul nașterii Sale și poate să merit să devin umila slujnică a Maicii lui Dumnezeu. Am făcut de asemenea un jurământ în inima mea să îmi păstrez virginitatea, dacă asta era acceptabil pentru el, și să posed absolut nimic în lume. Dar dacă Dumnezeu dorea altfel, dorința mea era ca voia Sa, nu a mea, să se înfăptuiască, deoarece aveam încredere că el putea să facă orice și nu vroia decât ceea ce este mai bine pentru mine. Astfel mi-am încredințat întreaga voință lui. Când timpul dictat a sosit pentru prezentarea fecioarelor în templul Domnului, am fost și eu prezentă acolo mulțumită bunăvoinței religioase a părinților mei. Îmi spuneam că nimic nu este imposibil pentru Dumnezeu, și că, de vreme ce El știa că nu doresc și nu vreau nimic decât El, va putea să îmi păstreze puritatea, dacă astfel îi era plăcut Lui: în caz contrar, făcă-se voia Sa!

Ascultând toate poruncile în templu, m-am întors acasă, arzând și mai mult cu dragoste pentru Dumnezeu decât înainte, fiind înflăcărată cu noi focuri și dorinți de iubire în fiecare zi. Din acest motiv m-am retras și mai mult de toate celelalte fiind singură noapte și zi, temându-mă foarte ca nu cumva gura mea să spună ceva sau urechile mele să audă ceva împotriva lui Dumnezeu sau ca nu cumva ochii mei să privească orice agreabil. Simțeam aceeași teamă și în tăcerea mea și eram foarte neliniștită ca nu cumva să tac cu privire la acele subiecte despre care ar fi trebuit mai degrabă să fi vorbit.

În timp ce eram astfel neliniștită în inima mea și singură cu mine, încredințându-mi toată speranța lui Dumnezeu, în același moment mi-a venit în minte să țin seama de marea putere a Domnului, cum îngerii și toate creaturile îl slujesc, și cum este indescritibilă și nesfârșita sa glorie. În timp ce mă minunam la toate acestea, am văzut trei priveliști minunate. Am văzut o stea, însă nu ca cele care strălucesc pe cer. Am văzut o lumină, însă nu ca cea care luminează în lume. Am simțit un parfum, nu de plante sau ceva asemănător, dar indescritibil de dulce, ce m-a umplut complet astfel că am simțit că aș vrea să tresalt de bucurie. În acel moment am auzit o voce, însă nu o voce omenească. Mi-a fost teamă când am auzit-o și mă întrebam dacă era o iluzie. Un înger al lui Dumnezeu a apărut înaintea mea în cea mai frumoasă formă umană, deși nu în trup, și mi-a vorbit: "Bucură-te, plină de har!"

Auzind, m-am întrebat ce ar putea aceasta să însemne și de ce mi-a dat un astfel de salut, întrucât eu știam și credeam că eram nedemnă de așa ceva, sau de orice lucru bun, însă de asemenea că era posibil pentru Dumnezeu să facă orice dorește. Îngerul a spus în continuare: "Copilul care se va naște din tine e Sfânt și se va numi Fiul lui Dumnezeu. Voia Domnului se va împlini." Nu m-am considerat vrednică și nici nu am întrebat pe înger "De ce?" sau "Când se va face aceasta?" ci am întrebat: "Cum va fi aceasta, de vreme ce eu nu cunosc bărbat?" Îngerul mi-a răspuns, precum am zis, că nimic nu este cu neputință la Dumnezeu, "Voința sa va fi îndeplinită".

Auzind cuvintele îngerului, am simțit cea mai fierbinte dorință pentru a deveni Maica lui Dumnezeu, iar sufletul meu a vorbit din iubire: "Iată-mă. Fie mie după cuvântul tău". La acel cuvânt, chiar atunci și acolo, Fiul meu a fost conceput în pântecele meu spre indescritibilă emoție a sufletului și a trupului. Când se afla în pântecele meu, L-am purtat fără nici o durere, greutate sau oboseală în corp. M-am smerit în fiecare mod, știind că cel pe care îl purtam era Atotputernicul. L-am născut fără nici un fel de durere sau păcat, la fel cum l-am conceput, cu așa o emoție a sufletului și a trupului încât simțeam de parcă aș fi pășit pe aer dintr-o asemenea trăire.

La fel cum a intrat în trupul meu spre bucuria întregului suflet, tot astfel, spre bucuria tuturor membrilor mele m-a lăsat, cu sufletu-mi veselindu-se iar virginitatea mea neatinsă. Privindu-L și contemplându-I frumusețea, știindu-mă nevrednică de un asemenea fiu, fericirea se infiltra de la un capăt la altul a sufletului meu precum picături de rouă. Contemplând locurile unde precum am învățat prin profeți, mâinile și picioarele sale aveau să fie pironite la Răstignire, ochii mi se umpleau de lacrimi iar Inima mi se sfâșia de tristețe. Fiul meu mi-a privit ochii ce plângeau atunci și s-a

întristat de moarte. Când reflectam asupra puterii Sale divine, eram iarăși consolată, realizând că aceasta era voința Sa și astfel era calea cea dreaptă; apoi mi-am conformat voința cu a Lui. Astfel bucuria îmi era mereu amestecată cu tristețe.

Când a sosit timpul Patimilor Fiului meu, dușmanii săi l-au prins. L-au lovit peste obraz și gât și l-au scuipat în timp ce îl batjocorau. Când a fost dus la stâlp și-a scos singur hainele și a pus mâinile pe el, iar dușmanii săi le-au legat fără milă. Legat de stâlp, fără nici un fel de acoperământ, așa cum fusese născut, a stat acolo suferind rușinea de a fi gol. Prietenii fugiseră, însă dușmanii erau gata de acțiune. Au stat acolo pe toate părțile și i-au biciuit trupul care era curat de orice fel de pată și păcat. Mă aflu în apropiere și, la prima lovitură, am căzut ca și moartă. Când mi-am revenit, puteam să-l văd trupul biciuit și flagelat până la coaste. Ce era încă și mai groaznic e că atunci când trăgeau înapoi biciurile, curelele îngreunate îi sfâșiau trupul.

În timp ce Fiul meu stătea acolo însângerat și acoperit de Răni, astfel că nici un loc sănătos nu a rămas pe el ca să mai fie biciuit, atunci cineva, trezit în spirit, a întrebat: "Aveți de gând să Îl omorâți necondamnat?" Apoi imediat i-a tăiat legăturile. După aceea Fiul meu și-a pus singur hainele înapoi. Am văzut că locul unde El a stat era acoperit de Sânge, iar după petele lăsate de urmele picioarelor am știut în care direcție pășise, căci pământul părea să fie udat de Sânge oriunde mergea. Nu au avut răbdare cu El ca să se îmbrace, dar îl împingeau și îl trăgeau ca să îl grăbească. În timp ce Fiul meu era dus precum un hoț, și-a uscat Sângele de la ochi.

După ce l-au condamnat, i-au pus Crucea grea pentru ca El să o care. A dus-o pentru un timp, dar apoi cineva a venit și l-a ajutat. În timp ce Fiul meu mergea spre locul Patimilor Sale, unii oameni îl loveau în gât, în timp ce alții îl loveau în față. Era lovit atât de tare și cu o asemenea forță încât, deși nu am văzut cine îl lovea, azeam sunetul loviturii foarte clar. Ajungând la locul Patimilor împreună cu El, am văzut toate instrumentele Morții Sale pregătite. Când Fiul meu a mers acolo, și-a dat jos singur hainele, în timp ce servitorii își spuneau unul altuia:

"Acestea sunt hainele noastre iar el nu le va primi înapoi de vreme ce e condamnat la moarte". Fiul meu stătea acolo, gol precum fusese născut, când cineva a venit fugind și i-a oferit un văl cu care bucuros și-a acoperit rușinea. Apoi cruzii săi călăi l-au luat și l-au întins pe Cruce, bătând în cuie mai întâi mâna Sa dreaptă pe grinda care avea o gaură în ea pentru cui. I-au străpuns mâna în punctul unde osul era mai solid. Cu o funie i-au tras cealaltă mână și au fixat-o de grindă în același mod. Apoi i-au răstignit piciorul drept cu cel stâng deasupra folosind două piroane astfel că toate tendoanele și venele au devenit nefiresc de încordate și crăpate. Apoi i-au pus cununa de spini pe cap tăind atât de adânc în capul venerabil al Fiului meu încât Sângele i-a umplut ochii în timp ce curgea, i-a înfundat urechile și i-a pătat barba. Stând pe Cruce rănit și însângerat, i s-a făcut milă de mine care stăteam în apropiere plină de lacrimi și, privind cu ochii Săi însângerați în direcția lui Ioan, nepotul meu, m-a încredințat lui.

În acel timp puteam să aud unii oameni spunând că Fiul meu e un hoț, alții că e un mincinos, iar alții spuneau că nu este nimeni altul mai vrednic de moarte decât El. Amărăciunea mea se reînnoia auzind toate acestea. Dar, la fel cum am spus mai înainte, când primul cui a fost bătut în El, acea prima lovitură m-a zdruncinat atât de mult încât am căzut ca moartă, cu ochii acoperiți în întuneric, cu mâinile tremurând iar picioarele nesigure. În amărăciunea neazului meu nu am putut să privesc decât după ce fusese ținut în totalitate pe Cruce. Când m-am ridicat, mi-am văzut Fiul atârnat acolo în suferință și în deplina-mi disperare, eu prea mahnită sa Mamă, de abia puteam să stau în picioare din cauza supărării.

Văzându-mă pe mine și pe ai săi prieteni plângând inconsolabil, Fiul meu a strigat cu un glas răsunător și trist spunând: "Tată, pentru ce m-ai abandonat?" Era ca și cum ar fi spus: "Nu este nimeni căruia să îi fie milă de mine în afară de tine, Tată." În acele momente ochii săi arătau pe

jumătate morți, obraji erau afundați, fața sa tristă, gura deschisă iar limba însângărată. Stomacul era supt către spatele său, tot fluidul fiind consumat, de parcă nu ar fi avut organe vitale. Întregul Trup era palid și fără vlagă din cauza pierderii de Sânge. Mâinile și picioarele erau rigid întinse, fiind trase spre Cruce și reprofile după forma Crucii. Barba și părul Său la fel în totalitate acoperite cu Sânge.

Acolo a stat, julit și învinețit, doar Inima Sa fiind încă înviorată, pentru că era de cea mai bună și puternică constituție. Din carnea mea a primit un trup îndeosebi de pur și elaborat cu grijă. Pielea Sa era atât de subțire și fragedă încât dacă era cătuși de puțin năpăstuită Sângele ar fi curs imediat. Sângele era atât de curat încât putea fi văzut în pielea sa lipsită de orice pată. Întocmai pentru că avea cea mai bună constituție, viața se lupta cu moartea în Trupul Său rănit. În anumite momente durerea din mădulare și tendoane se ridica spre încă viguroasa și neatinsa Inimă a Sa producând-i o incredibilă durere și suferință. În alte momente durerea cobora de la Inimă spre membrele Sale rănite, astfel, prelungind-I amarnic Moartea.

Înconjurat de dureri, Fiul meu a privit la prietenii care plângeau și care mai degrabă ar fi purtat ei durerea în locul Lui cu ajutorul Său sau ar fi ars în iad o eternitate decât să-L vadă astfel torturat. Supărarea la vederea tristeții prietenilor Săi a întrecut toată amărăciunea și durerile pe care le îndurase în trup și inimă, datorită marii iubiri pe care o avea pentru ei. Apoi, din excesiva angoasă trupească a firii sale omenești, a strigat către Tatăl: "Părinte, în mâinile tale îmi încredințez sufletul." Când eu, prea mahnita Sa Mamă, am auzit aceste cuvinte, întregul trup mi-a fremătat de amara durere a Inimii mele.

Oricât de des m-am gândit la acel strigăt de atunci, încă a rămas prezent și reînnoit în urechile mele. În timp ce Moartea Sa se apropia și Inima îi izburcea din cauza violentei dureri, întregul Trup a convulsionat și capul i s-a ridicat puțin apoi a căzut iarăși, gura i s-a deschis iar limba se putea vedea ca e însângărată. Mâinile i s-au retras puțin de la locul perforării iar picioarele au trebuit să poarte mai mult din greutatea trupului. Degetele și brațele s-au extins întrucâtva iar spatele s-a înțepenit strâns lângă Cruce.

Apoi unii oameni au vorbit către mine: "Maria, Fiul tău a murit." Alții spuneau: "A murit însă va învia". În timp ce toți plecau, un bărbat a venit și a înfipt o sulită în coasta Sa cu așa o forță încât aproape a ieșit pe cealaltă parte. Când sulita a fost scoasă, avea vârful roșu de Sânge. Văzând Inimă Preaiubitului meu Fiu străpunsă aveam impresia că propria mea Inimă fusese lovită atunci. Apoi a fost luat jos de pe Cruce. I-am ținut trupul pe genunchi; era precum al unui leproș, în totalitate învinețit. Ochii Săi erau fără viață și plini de Sânge, gura Sa rece ca gheața, barba precum sfoara, fața îi ajunsese țepănă. Mâinile îi deveniseră atât de rigide încât nu puteau fi îndoite.

L-am ținut pe genunchi la fel cum era pe Cruce, precum un om înțepenit în toate membrele sale. După aceasta l-am așezat într-o pânză curată iar cu îmbrăcămintea mea i-am uscat Rănile și membrele și i-am închis ochii și gura, fiind deschise atunci când a murit. Apoi l-am așezat în mormânt. Cât aș fi vrut să fiu pusă acolo vie împreună cu Fiul meu, dacă aceasta ar fi fost voia Sa! Toate acestea fiind făcute, dragul Ioan a venit și m-a adus acasă la el. Vezi, așadar, fiică, ceea ce Fiul meu a suferit pentru tine!

Cuvintele lui Cristos către mireasa sa despre cum s-a dat pe sine însuși, să fie răstignit de dușmani, și despre stăpânirea trupului de la mișcări nepermise, prin considerația Patimilor Sale.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 11

Fiul lui Dumnezeu a vorbit către mireasa sa, spunând: "Sunt Creatorul cerului și al pământului, iar

Trupul meu adevărat este cel consacrat pe altar. Iubește-mă din toată inima ta, căci te-am iubit și m-am predat dușmanilor mei din propria-mi voință, în timp ce prietenii și Maica mea erau lăsați în amarnică supărare și în doliu. Când am văzut pregătite sulița, cuiele, biciurile și celelate instrumente ale Patimilor mele, tot am continuat să merg să sufăr cu bucurie. Când capul îmi sângera din cauza coroanei de spini, Sângele curgând pe toate părțile, atunci, chiar dacă dușmanii mei ar fi intrat și în posesia Inimii mele, aș fi preferat mai degrabă să o las împărțită și rănită decât să te pierd. Deci, ești extrem de nerecunoscătoare dacă în schimbul unei asemenea generozități, nu mă iubești.

Capul meu a fost străpuns și aplecat pe Cruce pentru tine; capul tău ar trebui să fie înclinat spre smerenie. De vreme ce ochii mei au fost însângerați și plini de lacrimi, ochii tăi ar trebui să fie depărtați de priveliștile distractive. Deoarece urechile mele s-au umplut de Sânge și au auzit cuvinte batjocorătoare împotriva mea, ar trebui să-ți întorci urechile de la vorbirile nepotrivite și fără importanță. De vreme ce guriile mele i-a fost dată o băutură amară ca să bea însă i-a fost refuzată una dulce, ferește-ți gura ta de rău și las-o să fie deschisă pentru bine. Măinile mele fiind întinse de cuie, fie ca ocupațiile tale, care sunt simbolizate prin mâini, să fie întinse spre cei săraci și spre poruncile mele. Lasă ca picioarele tale, adică, afecțiunile tale, cu care ar trebui să pășești către mine, să fie răstignite pentru poftă pentru ca la fel cum Eu am suferit în tot trupul la fel și toate membrele tale să fie pregătite ca să mă asculte. Cer mai multă slujire de la tine decât din partea altora, căci ți-am oferit un mai mare har.

Despre cum un înger se roagă pentru mireasă și cum Cristos întreabă pe înger ce anume cere și ceea ce este bine pentru ea.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 12

Un înger bun, păzitorul miresei, a apărut rugându-se lui Cristos pentru ea. Domnul i-a răspuns și a zis: “Cine dorește să se roage pentru altul ar trebui să se roage pentru mântuirea aceluia. Ești precum un foc care nu se stinge vreodată, arzând neîncetat cu iubirea mea. Vezi și cunoști toate lucrurile atunci când mă vezi. Nu vrei nimic în afară de ceea ce vreau Eu. Așadar spune-mi, ce este bine pentru această nouă mireasă a mea?” A răspuns: “Doamne, tu pe toate le știi.” Domnul i-a spus: “Toate lucrurile, orice a fost făcut sau va urma, există etern în mine.

Înțeleg și cunosc toate lucrurile în cer și pe pământ iar în mine nu se află schimbare. Dar, pentru ca mireasa să poată recunoaște voința mea spune-mi ceea ce e bine pentru ea, acum cât ascultă.” Iar îngerul a spus: “Are o inimă mare și orgolioasă. Astfel îi trebuie nuiua ca să fie împlănită.” Atunci Domnul a spus: “Ce anume ceri pentru ea, prietene?” Îngerul a răspuns: “Doamne, cer să-I acorzi îndurare împreună cu nuiua.” Iar Domnul a spus: “De dragul tău, voi face astfel, de vreme ce Eu niciodată nu îndeplinesc dreptatea fără îndurare. Pentru aceasta mireasa ar trebui să mă iubească din toată inima.”

Despre cum un dușman al lui Dumnezeu a avut trei demoni înrânsul și despre sentința dată lui de Cristos.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 13

Dușmanul meu are trei demoni înrânsul. Cel dintâi locuiește în organele genitale, al doilea în inimă, al treilea în gură. Primul se aseamănă unui marinar care lasă apa să intre prin chilă, iar apa, crescând treptat, umple corabia. Astfel din cauza inundației ambarcațiunea se scufundă. Corabia simbolizează trupul său care este asaltat de tentațiile demonilor și de propriile pofte asemenea unor furtuni. Pofța trupească a intrat mai întâi prin chilă, adică, prin plăcerea pe care a avut-o în

gândurile rele. Deoarece nu a rezistat prin pocăință sau nu a acoperit găurile prin cuiele cumpătărilor, apa sau pofta a crescut zi de zi prin acordul său.

Corabia fiind astfel plină sau umplută de concupiscenta pântecelui, apa a inundat și a înghițit ambarcațiunea în poftă trupească astfel că nu a mai reușit să ajungă la portul salvării. Al doilea demon, locuind în inima sa, se aseamănă unui vierme așezat într-un măr care mai întâi mănâncă miezul iar apoi, după ce își depune excrementele acolo, străbate interiorul până când îl distruge în totalitate. Asta face diavolul. Mai întâi strică voința și dorințele bune ale unei persoane, care sunt precum miezul unde întreaga putere și bunătate se găsesc, și, îndată ce inima este golită de aceste bunuri, pune în locul lor în inimă gândurile și afecțiunile lumești pe care acea persoană le-a îndrăgit mai mult. Apoi îndeamnă întregul trup spre plăcerea lui, din acest motiv, curajul omului și înțelegerea se diminuează iar viața sa devine dificilă. Se aseamănă întradevăr unui măr lipsit de miez, adică, un om fără inimă, de vreme ce intră în Biserica mea lipsit de inima lui, neavând milă.

Al treilea demon se aseamănă unui arcaș ce, privind în jur prin ferestre, trage cu arcul în cei neștiutori. Cum se poate ca diavolul să nu fie înăuntrul unui om care mereu îl include în conversațiile sale? Ceea ce este iubit mai mult este menționat mai mult. Cuvintele aspre prin care îi rănește pe alții sunt ca niște săgeți trase prin tot atât de multe ferestre ca și numărul menționărilor diavolului sau de câte ori cuvintele sale rănesc oameni nevinovați și scandalizează pe cei simpli. Eu care sunt Adevărul jur pe Adevărul Meu că îl voi condamna la fel ca pe o desfrânată la foc și pucioasă, la fel ca pe un trădător ascuns, la mutilarea membrilor sale, asemenea unui batjocoritor al Domnului la rușine eternă. Totuși, câtă vreme sufletul este încă unit cu trupul său, îndurarea mea este deschisă pentru el. Ceea ce solicit este să participe la Sfânta Liturghie mai des, să nu dorească vreo onoare, să nu se teamă de reproșuri și să nu mai aibă vreodată acel nume sinistru pe buzele sale.

EXPLICAȚIE

Acest om, un stareț de ordin Cisterian, înmormântase pe cineva care a fost excomunicat. În timp ce rostea rugăciunea comemoratorie pentru el, Brigitta, învăluită în spirit, a auzit aceasta: “A făcut ce i-a stat în putere și l-a înmormântat. Poți fi sigură că prima înmormântare după aceasta va fi a sa. Căci a păcătuit împotriva Tatălui, care ne-a spus să nu arătăm părtinire și să nu îi onorăm pe cei bogați pe nedrept.

De dragul unui mic câștig trecător, acest om a onorat o persoană care nu merita și a pus-o alături de cei vrednici, lucru pe care nu trebuia să îl facă. A păcătuit de asemenea împotriva Duhului Meu, care este comuniunea și comunitatea celor drepti, înmormântând un om nedrept alături de cei Sfinți. A păcătuit și împotriva mea, Fiul, deoarece am spus: “Cel ce mă respinge pe mine va fi respins.” Acest om a onorat și a slăvit pe cineva pe care Biserica și preotul meu a respins.” Starețul s-a căit la auzul acestor cuvinte și a murit a patra zi.

Cuvintele lui Cristos către mireasa sa despre modul și respectul care trebuie să îl mențină în rugăciune; și despre cele trei feluri de oameni care îl slujesc pe Dumnezeu în această lume.

CARTEA 1 – CAPITOLUL 14

Sunt Dumnezeuul tău care a fost răstignit pe Cruce, Dumnezeu adevărat și om adevărat într-o singură persoană, prezent în mâinile preotului în fiecare zi. Oricând îmi oferi o rugăciune, să o sfârșești cu dorința ca întotdeauna voia mea și nu a ta să se îndeplinească. Nu aud rugăciunile tale în numele celor condamnați deja. Uneori, îți dorești să se înfăptuiască ceva care vine împotriva mântuirii tale, de aceea este necesar să îți încredințezi voința mie, căci nimic nu îmi este ascuns și nu îți ofer decât

ceea ce este benefic. Sunt mulți care nu se roagă cu intenția potrivită, de aceea nu merită să fie ascultați.

Sunt trei feluri de oameni care mă slujesc în această lume. Primii sunt aceia care cred că eu sunt Dumnezeu atotputernic și dătătorul a toate. Mă slujesc cu intenția de a obține bunuri și onoruri trecătoare, însă lucrurile cerești sunt precum nimic pentru ei, și ar prefera mai degrabă să le piardă ca să obțină bunuri prezente. Succesul lumesc în toate revine ca parte a lor, conform dorințelor pe care le au. Deoarece au pierdut comorile veșnice, îi recompensez cu alinări temporare pentru orice serviciu bun făcut pentru mine, până la cel mai mic lucru și până la ultima lor suflare. Cei din al doilea tip sunt cei care cred despre mine că sunt Dumnezeu atotputernicul și judecător strict, însă mă slujesc din teamă pentru pedeapsă și nu din dragoste pentru gloria cerească. Dacă nu s-ar teme de mine nu m-ar sluji.

Al treilea fel de oameni sunt aceia care cred că sunt Creatorul a toate și Dumnezeu adevărat; și cred că sunt drept și îndurător. Nu mă slujesc din vreo teamă pentru pedeapsă ci din iubire și caritate divină. Ar prefera orice pedeapsă, dacă ar putea să o suporte, decât să mă provoace măcar o dată la mânie. Aceștia cu adevărat merită să fie auziți când se roagă, căci voința lor e conformă cu a mea. Primul fel de slujitori nu se vor abate vreodată de la pedeapsă și nici nu mă vor vedea. Cel de-al doilea tip nu vor fi pedepsiți la fel de mult însă tot nu îmi vor vedea fața, dacă nu își corectează frica prin pocăință.

Cuvintele lui Cristos către mireasă descriindu-se pe sine asemenea unui rege măreț respectiv despre două comori ce simbolizează dragostea de Dumnezeu și dragostea pentru lume, și o lecție despre îmbunătățire în această viață.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 15

Sunt asemenea unui Rege puternic. Patru lucruri corespund unui rege. În primul rând trebuie să fie bogat, apoi generos, în al treilea rând înțelept, și în al patrulea, milos. Cu adevărat sunt Regele îngerilor și al întregii omeniri. Dețin aceste patru calități pe care le-am menționat. În primul rând, sunt cel mai avut dintre toți, căci aprovizionez nevoilor tuturor și încă posed la fel de mult după ce am dat. În al doilea rând, sunt cel mai generos, de vreme ce sunt pregătit să dau oricărui cere. În al treilea rând, sunt cel mai înțelept, deoarece cunosc scopul fiecăruia și ceea ce este cel mai bine pentru el sau ea. În al patrulea rând sunt milos, căci sunt mai pregătit să ofer decât este cineva ca să ceară. Am, se poate spune, două vistierii. Materiale apăsătoare, grele precum plumbul, sunt așezate în prima vistierie, și țepi ascuțiți captușesc compartimentul în care sunt păstrate.

Dar aceste obiecte grele ajung să pară ușoare ca penele, unei persoane care începe să le rostogolească și să le învârtă, iar apoi învață cum să le care. Lucrurile care înainte păreau grele devin ușoare, iar cele despre care se credea că sunt atât de ascuțite devin moi. În cea de-a doua vistierie pare să fie aur strălucitor împreună cu bijuterii prețioase și băuturi fine. Însă aurul este de fapt noroi iar băuturile sunt otravă. Două poteci duc spre interiorul acestor vistierii, deși înainte era doar una. La răscruci, adică, la intrarea spre cele două poteci, un om stătea și striga către alți trei oameni ce voiau să pășească pe a doua potecă, spunându-le: “Ascultați, ascultați ceea ce am de spus! Dar dacă nu vreți să mă ascultați, atunci măcar folosiți-vă ochii să vedeți că ceea ce spun este adevărat. Dacă nu vreți să vă folosiți nici urechile sau ochii, atunci măcar folosiți-vă mâinile să pipăiți și să vă convingeți că nu vorbesc fals.

Atunci primul dintre ei a spus: “Să îl ascultăm și să vedem dacă spune adevărul”. Al doilea om a spus: “Orice spune nu e adevărat”. Al treilea: “Știu că spune adevărul, însă nu îmi pasă”. Ce sunt aceste două vistierii dacă nu dragostea pentru Mine și dragostea pentru lume? Sunt două poteci

înspre aceste două vistierii: smerenia și altruismul complet duc spre dragostea Mea, în timp ce dorințele trupești duc la dragostea pentru lume. Pentru unii oameni povara pe care o poartă în dragostea mea pare să fie făcută din plumb, căci atunci când ar trebui să practice credința, să vegheze sau să practice stăpânirea de sine, ei cred că duc o încărcătură de plumb. Dacă trebuie să audă ironii și insulte pentru că petrec timp în rugăciune și în practica religiei, este ca și cum ar sta pe țepi: este mereu o tortură pentru ei.

Persoana care dorește să rămână în iubirea mea ar trebui ca mai întâi să rostogolească încărcătura, adică, să facă un efort ca să înfăptuiască binele dorindu-l cu o voință constantă. Apoi ar trebui să o ridice puțin, încet, adică, ar trebui să facă ce poate, gândindu-se: “Pot să fac aceasta bine dacă Dumnezeu mă va ajuta”. Apoi perseverând în sarcina pe care și-a însușit-o, va începe să care lucrurile care mai devreme îi păreau grele, cu așa o bunăvoință veselă încât toate dificultățile sau practici ale credinței și vegheri sau orice alte dificultăți, îi vor fi ușoare precum penele. Prietenii mei se odihnesc într-un loc în care, pentru cei trândavi și ticăloși, pare să fie captușit cu țepi și spini însă care oferă prietenilor mei, cea mai bună odihnă, moale ca petalele de trandafiri.

Calea directă în această vistierie este ca să-ți disprețuiești propria voință, ceea ce se întâmplă atunci când un om, meditănd asupra Patimilor și Morții mele, nu îi pasă de propria sa voință însă îi rezistă și constant se străduie ca să devină mai bun. Deși această cale este oarecum dificilă la început, tot este multă plăcere procedând astfel, atât de multă încât lucrurile ce la început îi păreau imposibil de cărat mai târaiu devin foarte ușoare, astfel încât își poate spune pe drept: “Povara Domnului este ușoară”. Cea de-a doua vistierie este lumea. În ea se află aur, bijuterii prețioase și băuturi care par savuroase însă devin amare precum otrava odată gustate.

Ceea ce se întâmplă cu toți cei ce cară aurul este că, atunci când corpul slăbește iar membrele nu îi mai ajută, atunci când măduva se risipește iar corpul cade la pământ prin moarte, atunci dau drumul la tot aurul și la toate bijuteriile, devenind la fel de valoroase ca și noroiul pentru ei. Băuturile lumii, adică, plăcerile sale, par savuroase, însă odată ajunse în stomac, fac mintea să slăbească și îngreunează inima, ruinează trupul iar persoana apoi se vestejește precum iarba. În timp ce durerea morții se apropie toate lucrurile savuroase devin ca o otravă amară. Capriciile conduc la această vistierie, oricând unei persoane nu îi pasă să reziste poftelor inferioare și nu meditează asupra la ce am poruncit și la ce am făcut, însă face imediat ce îi vine în minte, fie că este bine sau nu.

Trei oameni merg pe această potecă. Prin ei vreau să spun toți cei destrăbălați, toți cei care iubesc lumea și propria lor voință. Am strigat către ei în timp ce stăteam la răscruci la intrarea spre cele două căi, de vreme ce, prin venirea mea în trup omenesc, am arătat omenirii două căi: cea care trebuie urmată și cea care trebuie evitată; drumul care duce la viață și cel care duce la moarte. Înainte de venirea mea în formă umană, obișnuia să fie o singură cale. Cu ea toți oamenii, buni și răi, au ajuns în iad. Eu sunt cel care a strigat, iar strigătul meu a fost acesta:

“Oameni, ascultați-mi cuvintele care conduc la calea vieții, folosiți-vă simțurile să înțelegeți că ceea ce spun e adevărat. Dacă nu le ascultați sau nu puteți face acest lucru, măcar priviți – adică, folosiți credința și rațiunea – și vedeți că ceea ce spun este adevărat. În același fel în care un lucru vizibil poate fi distins de ochii trupești, la fel și lucrurile invizibile pot fi percepute și crezute prin ochii credinței. Sunt multe suflete simple în Biserică ce fac puține lucruri însă se mântuiesc prin credința lor. Prin ajutorul ei aceștia cred că eu sunt Creatorul și Răscumpărătorul universului. Nu este nimeni care nu poate să înțeleagă și să ajungă să creadă că eu sunt Dumnezeu, dacă doar se gândește la cum pământul rodește și cum cerurile dau ploaia, cum copacii înverzesc, cum animalele există fiecare în propria sa specie, cum stelele stau la dispoziția omenirii, cum lucruri opuse voinței omului se întâmplă.

Din toate acestea, o persoană poate vedea că este muritoare și că Dumnezeu este cel care aranjează

toate aceste lucruri. Dacă Dumnezeu nu ar exista, totul s-ar afla în dezordine. În consecință, toate au fost aranjate de Dumnezeu într-un mod rațional de dragul instruirii omului. Nici măcar cel mai mic lucru nu există și nu este menținut în lume fără un rost. Ca atare, dacă o persoană nu poate înțelege sau cuprinde puterile mele din cauza slăbiciunii sale, poate cu ajutorul credinței să vadă și să creadă. Însă oamenilor, dacă nu vreți să vă folosiți intelectul ca să țineți seama de puterea mea, vă stă la îndemână totuși să vă folosiți mâinile ca să atingeți faptele pe care Eu și sfinții mei le-am săvârșit. Ele sunt atât de clare încât nimeni nu se poate îndoi că ele sunt lucrările Domnului.

Cine a înviat morții și a redat vederea orbilor dacă nu Dumnezeu? Cine a alungat demonii dacă nu Dumnezeu? Ce am predicat dacă nu lucruri folositoare pentru mântuirea sufletului și a trupului, și ușor de dus la capăt. Totuși. Primul om spune, sau mai degrabă unii oameni spun: “Să ascultăm și să testăm dacă ceea ce spune este adevărat!” Acești oameni rămân cu mine pentru un timp și mă slujesc, nu din iubire ci ca un experiment și imitând pe alții, fără ca să renunțe la propria lor voință ci purtând-o înainte cu a mea. Se află într-o poziție periculoasă, deoarece vor să slujească la doi stăpâni, deși nu pot servi pe nici unul bine. Când vor fi chemați, vor fi răsplătiți de stăpânul pe care l-au iubit mai mult.

Cel de-al doilea om, sau mai degrabă unii oameni spun: “Orice spune este fals iar Scriptura este falsă.” Eu sunt Dumnezeu, creatorul a toate, fără mine nimic nu s-a făcut. Am stabilit noile și vechile porunci, ele au venit din gura mea, și nu există minciună în ele pentru că eu sunt Adevărul. În consecință, cei care spun că sunt fals și că Sfânta Scriptură este falsă nu mă vor vedea la față vreodată, căci a lor conștiință le spune ca eu sunt Dumnezeu, întrucât toate lucrurile se întâmplă după voința și dispoziția mea. Cerul le dă lor lumina, ei nu pot să își dea singuri lumină; pământul rodește, aerul face pământul roditor, toate animalele sunt stabilite într-un mod anume, demonii mă mărturisesc, cei drepti suferă lucruri incredibile de dragul iubirii mele.

Ei văd toate aceste lucruri, însă nu mă văd pe mine. Ar putea de asemenea să mă vadă în dreptatea mea, dacă ar lua în considerare cum pământul înghite pe cei lipsiți de respect, cum focul îi distruge pe cei ticăloși. În același mod pot să mă vadă în îndurarea mea, ca atunci când apa a curs pentru cei drepti dintr-o stâncă sau când apele s-au dat la o parte pentru ei, ca și atunci când focul nu i-a vătămat sau când cerurile le-au dar hrană cum face pământul. Pentru că ei văd aceste lucruri și încă spun că sunt un mincinos, nu mă vor vedea în veci. Al treilea om spune, sau mai degrabă, unii oameni spun: “Știm foarte bine că El este Dumnezeul cel adevărat, însă nu ne pasă”. Acești oameni vor fi chinuți o veșnicie, pentru că ma disprețuiesc pe mine, Domnul și Dumnezeul lor. Oare nu este mare dispreț din partea lor să se folosească de darurile mele dar să refuze ca să mă slujească?

Dacă ar fi obținut aceste lucruri prin propria lor sânguință și nu în totalitate de la mine, atunci disprețul lor nu ar părea atât de mare. Însă voi oferi harul meu celor care încep să întoarcă povara mea în mod voluntar și se străduiesc cu o voință fierbinte să facă ceea ce le stă în putință. Voi lucra alături de cei care duc povara mea, adică, aceia care progresează zi de zi din dragoste pentru mine, și voi fi tăria lor și-i voi înflăcăra atât de tare încât vor dori să facă mai mult. Oamenii care rămân în locul ce pare să îi înțepe – însă în realitate este pașnic – sunt cei care trudescri și nopți fără să obosească ci crescând mereu și mai înflăcărați, gândindu-se că ceea ce fac este puțin. Aceștia îmi sunt cei mai dragi prieteni, și sunt puțini deoarece alții găsesc băuturile din cea de-a doua visticie mai agreabile.

Despre cum mireasa a văzut un sfânt vorbind lui Dumnezeu despre o femeie ce era groaznic chinată de diavol și care mai târziu a fost eliberată prin rugăciunile Sfintei Fecioare.

Mireasa a văzut unul dintre sfinți vorbind lui Dumnezeu și spunând: “De ce chinuie diavolul sufletul acestei femei pe care ai răscumpărat-o prin Sângele tău?” Diavolul a răspuns imediat și a zis: “Pentru că îmi aparține pe bună dreptate.” Domnul a spus: “Prin ce drept este a ta?” Diavolul i-a răspuns: “Sunt” spuse el “două căi”. Una duce spre cer, iar cealaltă spre iad. Când le-a privit, conștiința și rațiunea i-au spus că ar trebui să meargă pe drumul meu. Și deoarece a avut o voință liberă pentru a alege, a considerat că ar fi avantajos să își îndrepte voința spre înfăptuirea păcatului, apoi a început să meargă pe calea mea.

Mai târziu am amăgit-o prin trei vicii: poftă, lăcomie pentru bani, și lascivitate. Acum locuiesc în pânțele și în firea sa. Țin de ea prin cinci mâini. Cu o mână îi cuprind ochii, ca să nu vadă lucruri spirituale. Cu cea de-a doua îi țin mâinile, să nu facă fapte bune. Cu a treia îi țin picioarele, să nu fugă spre bunătate. Cu a patra mână îi cuprind mintea, pentru a nu-i fie rușine să păcătuiască. Iar cu a cincea îi țin inima, să nu se întoarcă prin căință.”

Sfânta Fecioară Maria s-a adresat atunci Fiului ei: “Fiul meu, fă-l să spună adevărul despre ceea ce vreau să îl întreb.” Fiul a răspuns: “Ești Maica mea, Regina Cerului, ești Maica Milei, consolarea sufletelor din Purgator, ești bucuria celor ce se află în lume. Ești Stăpâna îngerilor, cea mai minunată creatură în fața lui Dumnezeu. Ai autoritate și asupra diavolului. Poruncește acestui demon tu însuși, Mamă, și îți va răspunde la orice.” Sfânta Fecioară a întrebat apoi pe diavol: “Spune-mi, demonule, ce intenție avea această femeie înainte de a intra în biserică?” Diavolul i-a răspuns: “Cu hotărârea fermă de a nu mai păcătui.”

Iar Fecioara Maria a spus lui: “Întrucât intenția sa precedentă o conducea spre iad, spune-mi, în ce direcție tinde prezenta sa intenție de a se feri de păcat?” Diavolul i-a răspuns cu greu: “Intenția de a se feri de păcat o conduce spre Rai.” Fecioara Maria a spus: “Deoarece ai recunoscut că era dreptul tău să o depărtezi de la calea Sfintei Biserici datorită intenției sale anterioare, atunci este acum o chestiune de dreptate ca ea să fie adusă înapoi spre Biserică datorită prezentei intenții a ei. Acum demonule, îți voi pune încă o întrebare: Spune-mi ce intenție are în prezenta sa stare de conștiință?”

Diavolul i-a răspuns: “În gândul său ea se căiește teribil și îi pare rău pentru ce a făcut; și se hotărăște ferm să nu mai comită asemenea păcate ci vrea să pășească spre bine pe cât poate”. Fecioara l-a întrebat apoi pe diavol: “Pot aceste trei păcate a lascivității, poftii și lăcomiei să existe într-o inimă în același timp cu cele trei dispoziții bune a pocăinței, regretului și scopul de îmbunătățire?” Diavolul a răspuns: “Nu”. Fecioara binecuvântată a continuat: “Spune-mi atunci, care dintre acestea ar trebui să se micșoreze și să dispară din inima ei; cele trei virtuți sau cele trei vicii care spui că nu pot ocupa același loc în același timp? Diavolul a răspuns: “Zic, păcatele.”

Iar Fecioara a răspuns: “Atunci, calea spre iad e închisă pentru ea și drumul spre Rai îi stă deschis”. Din nou, Sfânta Fecioară a întrebat pe diavol: “Spune-mi, dacă un tâlhar așteaptă afară la ușa miresei dorind să o răpească, ce ar face mirele?” Diavolul a răspuns: “Dacă mirele este bun și nobil, ar trebui să o apere și să își riște viața pentru binele ei”. Atunci Fecioara a spus: “Tu ești ticălosul tâlhar. Acest suflet este mireasa ce aparține mirelui, Fiul meu, care a răscumpărat-o cu propriul său Sânge. Ai corupt-o și ai luat-o prin forță. Astfel, deoarece Fiul meu este mirele sufletului ei și Domn peste tine, este îndatorirea ta să fugi din fața Lui.”

EXPLICAȚIE

Această femeie era o prostituată ce dorea să se întoarcă la cele lumești deoarece diavolul o tulbura zi și noapte, atât de mult, încât în mod vizibil îi apăsa ochii în cap și, în timp ce alții priveau, o trăgea afară din pat. Apoi, în prezența mai multor martori demni de crezare, Sfânta Brigitta i-a spus deschis: “Pleacă, diavole, ai necăjit această creatură a lui Dumnezeu destul.” După ce a spus aceasta, femeia a rămas presată cu ochii spre pământ timp de jumătate de oră iar apoi s-a ridicat

spunând: “Întradevăr, am văzut diavolul în cele mai stricate forme ieșind afară pe fereastră iar o voce mi-a spus: ‘Femeie, ai fost eliberată cu adevărat’ “. Din acea oră mai departe femeia a fost scăpată de toată furia și nu a mai suferit gânduri necurate, ajungând la odihna sa printr-o moarte bună.

Cuvintele lui Cristos către mireasa sa comparând un păcătos cu trei lucruri: un vultur, un vânător și un luptător.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 17

Sunt Isus Cristos care vorbesc cu tine. Eu sunt cel care a fost în pântecul Fecioarei, Dumnezeu adevărat și om adevărat. Deși eram în sânul Fecioarei, domneam peste creație împreună cu Tatăl. Acel om, care e un așa ticălos dușman al meu, se aseamănă cu trei lucruri. Mai întâi, se aseamănă cu un vultur care zboară în aer în timp ce alte păsări zboară sub el; apoi, este precum un vânător care cântă la un fluier pătat cu smoală lipicioasă și a cărui melodie încântă păsările astfel că ele zboară spre fluier și rămân prinse în smoală; în al treilea rând, el se aseamănă unui luptător care e primul în fiecare meci. Se aseamănă unui vultur, pentru că în mândria sa nu poate să tolereze pe nimeni ca să fie deasupra lui, și rănește pe oricine apucă cu ghearele răutății sale.

Voi tăia aripile puterii și mândriei sale și voi îndepărta răutatea sa de pe pământ. Îl voi arunca în uleiul nestins, iar acolo va fi chinuit fără încetare, dacă nu își îndreaptă căile. Se aseamănă și unui vânător deoarece atrage pe toți la sine prin dulceața cuvintelor și promisiunilor, încât oricine vine la el este prins în osândă și nu mai poate scăpa de ea vreodată. Pentru aceasta păsările iadului îi vor ciuguli ochii afară astfel că nu îmi va vedea vreodată gloria ci doar veșnica întunecime a iadului. Îi vor tăia urechile astfel că nu va auzi cuvintele gurii mele.

În schimbul cuvintelor sale dulci, îi vor da amărăciune de jos până sus și va îndura la fel de multe pedepse ca numărul celor pe care i-a condus la pierzanie. De asemenea, se aseamănă unui luptător care ocupă primul loc în răutate, nedorind să-l cedeze nimănui și hotărât fiind să-i învingă pe toți. La fel unui luptător atunci, el va ocupa primul loc în fiecare pedeapsă; pedeapsa lui va fi constant reînnoită și nu se va sfârși în veci. Totuși, câtă vreme sufletul îi este unit cu trupul, îndurarea mea stă pregătită pentru el.

EXPLICAȚIE

Acesta era un cavaler foarte puternic, care ura clerul foarte mult și obișnuia să arunce insulte la adresa lor. Revelația precedentă este despre el, la fel și următoarea: “Fiul lui Dumnezeu spune: ‘O cavaler lumesc, întreabă pe cei înțelepți despre ceea ce s-a întâmplat cu mândrul Aman care disprețuise pe poporul meu! Oare nu a fost moartea sa rușinoasă și o mare decădere? Acest om batjocorăște pe mine și pe ai mei prieteni în același mod. De aceea, la fel cum Israel nu a jelit moartea lui Aman, prietenii mei nu vor jeli moartea acestui om. Va avea parte de o amarnică moarte, dacă nu își îndreaptă căile.’ “ Și aceasta s-a întâmplat.

Cuvintele lui Cristos către a sa mireasă explicând că trebuie să fie smerenie în casa lui Dumnezeu și despre cum această casă indică viața religioasă; cum clădirile, darurile(pomenile) și lucrurile asemănătoare trebuie să fie donate din bunuri achiziționate în mod corect; și despre restituiri.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 18

În casa Mea ar trebui să fie toată acea smerenie ce acum este doar disprețuită. Ar trebui să fie un

perete solid între bărbați și femei, pentru că deși sunt capabil să apăr pe oricine și să-i sprijin pe toți fără să fie nevoie de un zid, totuși, de dragul precauției și din pricina vicleniei diavolului, vreau un perete care să despartă cele două șederi. Trebuie să fie un perete solid, moderat însă nu prea înalt. Ferestrele trebuie să fie simple și transparente, acoperișul moderat de înalt, astfel că nimic nu poate fi văzut fără a sugera smerenie. Astăzi, oamenii care construiesc case pentru mine sunt precum maiștri constructori care iau de păr pe stăpânul casei de cum intră și îl calcă în picioare.

Ei înalță noroiul și pun aurul sub picioare. Asta fac ei pentru mine. Construiesc noroi, adică, încarcă bunurile temporare și perisabile spre cer, astfel vorbind, în timp ce nu le pasă deloc de suflete, care sunt mai prețioase decât aurul. Când vreau să merg la ei prin predicatorii mei sau prin gândurile bune, mă iau de păr și mă calcă în picioare, adică, mă atacă prin blasfemie și consideră faptele și cuvintele mele a fi mizerabile precum noroiul. Se cred mai înțelepți.

Dacă ar fi vrut să construiască lucruri pentru mine și pentru slava mea, ar fi lucrat mai întâi la propriile lor suflete. Fie ca oricine construiește casa mea să aibă cea mai mare grijă ca să nu lase nici măcar un singur bănuț care nu a fost câpătat în mod corect și drept să meargă pentru clădire. Sunt destui oameni care știu că posedă bunuri necinstite și totuși nu le pare rău deloc și nici nu intenționează să le restituie și să aducă satisfacție pentru furatul și înșelăciunile lor, deși ar putea să facă acestea dacă ar vrea. Totuși, de vreme ce realizează că nu pot păstra aceste lucruri pentru totdeauna, ei dau o parte din bunurile necinstite la biserici, ca și cum să mă împace prin donația lor. Păstrează celălalte posesii legitime pentru descendenții lor. Acest lucru nu îmi este plăcut deloc.

O persoană care dorește să îmi facă pe plac prin darurile sale ar trebui mai întâi să aibă dorința de a-și îndrepta căile iar apoi să facă acele fapte bune de care este capabilă. Ar trebui să deplângă răul făcut și să facă compensație dacă poate. Dacă nu poate, ar trebui să aibă intenția de a face despăgubire pentru bunurile achiziționate în mod fraudulos. Apoi trebuie să aibă grijă ca să nu mai comită asemenea păcate din nou. Dacă persoana căreia trebuie să înapoieze bunurile câpătate necinstit nu mai trăiește, atunci poate face o donație mie, căci eu pot despăgubi pe oricine. Dacă nu le poate înapoia, cu acea condiție ca să se smerească în fața mea în scopul de îmbunătățire și o inimă căită, Eu dețin mijloacele pentru a compensa și, fie acum sau în viitor, să înapoiez proprietatea tuturor celor care au fost înșelați.

Îți voi explica acum înțelesul casei pe care vreau să o construiesc. Casa este viața religioasă. Eu însumi, Creatorul a toate, prin care toate lucrurile au fost făcute și există, sunt fundația ei. Patru pereți sunt în această casă. Primul este dreptatea prin care îi voi judeca pe toți cei care se împotrivesc acestei case. Al doilea perete este înțelepciunea prin care voi lumina pe locuitori cu învățătura și cunoașterea mea. Al treilea reprezintă puterea cu care îi voi întări împotriva uneltirilor diavolului. Cel de-al patrulea perete este îndurarea mea, care întâmpină cu bucurie pe toți care o caută. În acest perete se află ușa harului prin care toți cei care cercetează sunt bineveniți. Acoperișul casei reprezintă caritatea prin care tratez păcatele celor care mă iubesc, astfel că nu vor fi condamnați pentru păcatele lor.

Fereastra de pe acoperiș prin care intră lumina soarelui reprezintă considerația acordată harului Meu. Prin ea căldura divinității mele ajunge înăuntrul locuitorilor. Prin faptul că peretele ar trebui să fie mare și puternic semnifică aceea că nimeni nu poate slăbi sau distruge cuvintele Mele. Că ar trebui să fie moderat de înalt înseamnă că înțelepciunea mea poate fi înțeleasă și cuprinsă parțial însă niciodată în totalitate. Ferestrele simple și transparente înseamnă că ale mele cuvinte sunt simple, și totuși prin ele lumina cunoașterii divine intră în lume. Acoperișul moderat de înalt înseamnă că vorbele mele se vor manifesta nu într-un mod care nu poate fi înțeles ci într-unul de înțeles și clar.

Cuvintele Creatorului către mireasă despre splendoarea puterii, înțelepciunii și virtuții Sale; și despre cum aceia despre care acum se spune că sunt înțelepți păcătuiesc cel mai mult împotriva Sa.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 19

Eu sunt Creatorul cerului și al pământului. Dețin trei calități. Sunt atotputernic, atotștiutor și cel mai mare în virtute. Puterea mea este atât de mare încât îngerii mă onorează în Cer, iar demonii din iad nu cutează să mă privească. Toate elementele îmi stau la dispoziție. Sunt atât de înțelept întrucât nimeni nu reușește să mă ajungă în înțelepciunea mea. Cunoașterea mea este întrucât că îmi sunt cunoscute toate care au fost sau vor fi. Sunt atât de rațional încât nici cel mai mic lucru, fie un vierme sau un alt animal, nu contează cât de urât, nu a fost creat fără motiv. Sunt de asemenea atât de virtuos încât fiecare bine curge de la mine ca de la un izvor bun iar toată dulceața vine de la mine ca de la un vin bun. Fără mine, nimeni nu poate fi puternic, nimeni înțelept, nimeni virtuos. Din acest motiv, puternicii oameni ai lumii păcătuiesc împotriva mea foarte mult.

Le-am dăruit tărie și putere pentru a mă onora, însă ei își atribuie onoarea lor, de parcă le-ar fi luat de la ei. Nenorociții de ei nu se gândesc la slăbiciunile lor. De ar fi să le trimit cea mai mică infirmitate, s-ar prăbuși imediat și totul și-ar pierde valoare pentru ei. Cum atunci vor putea ei să reziste Măririi Mele și pedepselor pentru eternitate? Însă cei despre care acum se spune că sunt înțelepți păcătuiesc încă și mai mult împotriva mea. Căci le-am oferit simțuri, înțelegere și înțelepciune cu scopul ca ei să mă iubească, însă unicul lucru pe care îl percep ei este propriul avantaj temporal. Au ochi în capul lor însă privesc numai spre propriile plăceri.

Sunt orbi cu privire la a-mi mulțumi, mie, cel care le-am oferit totul, de vreme ce nimeni, fie bun sau rău, nu poate pricepe sau înțelege nimic fără mine, chiar dacă permit ca cei ticăloși să își îndrepte voința spre orice doresc ei. Mai mult decât atât, nimeni nu poate fi virtuos fără mine. Aș putea folosi acum acel proverb care deseori ajunge citat: “Toți îl disprețuiesc pe omul răbdător.” Datorită răbdării mele toți mă consideră teribil de nesăbuit și de aceea toți mă privesc cu dispreț. Dar vai lor atunci când, după multă răbdare, le voi face cunoscută sentința mea asupra lor! Înaintea mea vor fi precum noroiul care cade spre adâncuri și nu se oprește până ce nu ajunge în cea mai joasă parte a iadului.

Un plăcut dialog între Sfânta Fecioară și Fiul; între Sfânta Fecioară cu Fiul și mireasa; și despre cum mireasa trebuie să se pregătească pentru nuntă.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 20

Maica a apărut vorbind Fiului: “Ești Regele gloriei, Fiul meu, tu ești Stăpân peste toți stăpânii, ai creat cerul cu pământul și toate care se află în ele. Fie ca fiecare dorință a ta să se îndeplinească, facă-se fiecare voie a ta!” Fiul a răspuns: “Este un vechi proverb care spune ‘ceea ce un tânăr învață în tinerețe sa păstrează și când înaintea în vârstă!’ Mamă, din tinerețe ai învățat să îmi urmezi voința și să îți încredințezi toată voia ta mie. În mod corect ai spus: ‘Facă-se voia ta!’ Ești precum aurul prețios care este așezat și bătut cu ciocanul pe o solidă nicovală, căci ai fost lovită de tot felul de chinuri și ai suferit la Patimile Mele mai mult decât toți ceilalți. Când Inima Mea a izbucnit din cauza vehemente dureri de pe Cruce, ți-a rănit Inima precum oțelul ascuțit. Ai fi lăsat-o de bună voie să fie tăiată în două, dacă aceasta ar fi fost voința mea. Chiar dacă ai avut cum să te opui Pătimirii Mele și să ceri ca să fiu lăsat în viață, tot nu ai vrut să fie în alt fel decât conform voinței mele. Pentru aceasta bine ai făcut să spui: ‘Facă-se voia ta!’ “

Apoi Maria a spus miresei: “Mireasă a Fiului meu, iubește-mi Fiul, căci El te iubește pe tine. Cinstește pe sfinți, care se află în prezența Sa. Ei sunt precum stelele fără număr a căror lumină și

splendoare nu poate fi comparată cu nici o lumină temporală. Precum lumina din lume diferă de întuneric, tot așa – însă mult mai mult – lumina sfinților diferă de lumina acestei lumi. Adevăr îți spun că dacă sfinții ar fi văzuți în mod clar, așa cum sunt cu adevărat, nici un ochi omenesc nu ar putea să-i privească fără a-și pierde vederea trupească.” După aceea Fiul Fecioarei a vorbit către mireasa sa, spunând: “Mireasa mea, trebuie să deții patru calități. Mai întâi, trebuie să fii pregătită pentru nunta divinității mele, acolo unde nu există poftă trupească ci doar cea mai dulce plăcere spirituală, genul care se cuvine pentru Dumnezeu să aibă cu un suflet cast. În acest fel, nici dragostea pentru copiii tăi și nici pentru bunurile temporale sau pentru rudele tale nu ar trebui să te atragă de la iubirea mea. Nu lăsa ca să ți se întâmple ceea ce s-a întâmplat cu acele fecioare nesăbuite care nu erau pregătite atunci când Domnul a voit să le cheme la nuntă iar astfel au fost lăsate în urmă. Apoi, trebuie să ai încredere în cuvintele mele.

Căci Eu sunt Adevărul, iar nimic în afară de ceea ce este adevărat nu vine de pe buzele mele, iar nimeni nu poate găsi decât adevăr în cuvintele mele. Câteodată spun ceva în sensul spiritual, iar în celelalte ocazii după litera cuvântului, astfel că atunci ele trebuie luate după înțelesul lor propriu. În consecință, nimeni nu mă poate acuza de minciună. În al treilea rând, trebuie să fii ascultătoare astfel ca să nu fie nici măcar un singur membru în trupul tău prin care să greșești și pe care să nu-l supui la pocăință și compensația corespunzătoare. Deși sunt îndurător, nu renunț la dreptate. Așadar, ascultă cu smerenie și bucurie pe aceia de care trebuie să ascuți, astfel ca să nu faci nici măcar ceea ce pare folositor și rezonabil pentru tine dacă este împotriva ascultării. Este mai bine să renunți la propria ta voință din ascultare, chiar dacă scopul ei este bun, și să urmezi voința îndrumătorului tău spiritual, cu acea condiție ca să nu fie împotriva mântuirii sufletului tău sau în alt fel irațional. În cel de-al patrulea rând, trebuie să fii smerită, căci ești unită într-o căsătorie spirituală.

Trebuie de aceea să fii umilă și modestă la sosirea mirelui tău. Fie ca lucrarea mâinilor tale să fie prudentă și cumpătată, adică, lasă-ți trupul să practice abstenența și să fie bine disciplinat deoarece vei purta rodul copiilor spirituali pentru binele multora. În același mod în care un lăstar este altoit pe o tulpină uscată și aceasta începe să înflorească, tu trebuie să rodești și să înflorești prin harul meu. Iar harul meu te va îmbăta, și întreaga oștire cerească se va înveseli pentru vinul dulce pe care ți-l voi oferi. Nu îți pierde încrederea în bunătatea mea. Te asigur că la fel cum Zaharia și Elisabeta s-au veselit în inimile lor cu o bucurie de nedescris la promisiunea unui viitor copil, la fel și tu, te vei veseli pentru harul pe care vreau să ți-l ofer și, pe lângă aceasta, alții se vor bucura prin tine. A fost un înger cel care a vorbit celor doi, Zaharia și Elisabeta, însă Eu, Dumnezeu și Creatorul îngerilor și al tău, sunt cel care îți vorbește ție. De dragul meu, cei doi au dat naștere bunului meu prieten Ioan. Prin tine vreau mulți copii să mi se nască, nu din trup ci din spirit. Adevăr îți spun, Ioan era asemenea unui stufăriș plin de dulceață și miere, căci nimic impur nu a intrat vreodată în gura sa și nici nu a trecut vreodată dincolo de limita necesității atunci când lua ceea ce avea nevoie pentru a trăi. Sămânța nu i-a părăsit vreodată trupul, de aceea poate, pe bună dreptate, să fie numit un înger și un feciorelnic.”

Cuvintele mirelui către a sa mireasă, folosind în mod admirabil o alegorie despre un vrăjitor, pentru a ilustra și a explica pe diavol.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 21

Mirele, Isus, a vorbit miresei sale în alegorii, folosind exemplul unei broaște. A spus: “Un anume vrăjitor avea aur curat și strălucitor. Un om simplu și blând manierat a venit la el dorind să cumpere aurul. Vrăjitorul i-a zis: ‘Nu vei lua acest aur, decât dacă îmi vei da aur mai bun și într-o cantitate mai mare.’ I-a răspuns: ‘Doresc aurul tău atât de mult încât îți voi da ceea ce vrei decât să mă lipsesc de el.’ După ce a dat vrăjitorului aur mai bun și într-o cantitate mai mare, a luat aurul strălucitor de la acesta și l-a pus într-un cufăr, plănuiind să facă din el un inel pentru degetul său.

După ce a trecut puțin timp, vrăjitorul a mers la acel om simplu și i-a spus: ‘Aurul pe care l-ai cumpărat și l-ai pus în cufărul tău nu este aur, precum crezi, ci o broască urâtă, care a fost crescută la sânul meu și hrănită cu mâncarea mea. Iar pentru a testa adevărul acestui lucru, deschide cufărul și vei vedea cum broasca va sări la pieptul meu unde a fost crescută.’ Când omul a încercat să deschidă și să afle, o broască putea fi văzută înăuntrul cufărului, acoperământul fiind suspendat pe patru balamale ce stăteau să cadă. Atunci când capacul cufărului a fost deschis iar broasca a văzut vrăjitorul, a sărit la pieptul lui. Slujitorii și prietenii omului simplu au văzut aceasta și au zis către el: ‘Stăpâne, aurul său bun se află înăuntrul broaștei și, dacă dorești, poți lua cu ușurință aurul.’ ‘Cum?’ întrebă el. ‘Cum aş putea?’ I-au spus: ‘Dacă cineva ar fi să ia o lanțetă foarte ascuțită și încălzită iar apoi să o împingă în spatele broaștei, curând ar scoate aurul din acea porțiune a spatelui unde se află scobitura. Dacă nu poate găsi nici o scobitură, atunci ar trebui prin orice efort să împingă lanțeta cu fermitate, iar în acest mod vei lua înapoi ce ai cumpărat.’

Cine este acest vrăjitor dacă nu diavolul, ademenind oamenii la plăceri și glorie deșartă? Făgăduiește că ceea ce este fals e adevărat și face ca ceea ce este adevărat să pară a fi fals. Are în posesie acel aur prețios, adică, sufletul pe care, prin divina-mi putere, l-am făcut mai prețios decât toate stelele și planetele. L-am făcut nemuritor și ferm; și mă încântă mai mult decât restul creației. L-am pregătit un loc de odihnă veșnic, să rămână cu mine. L-am răscumpărat de la diavol cu aur mai bun și mai scump oferind propriul meu trup, imun de orice păcat, și îndurând o Pătimire atât de amară încât nici un membru nu a rămas fără a fi rănit. Am așezat sufletul răscumpărat în trup la fel ca într-un cufăr, până ce va veni timpul când îi voi oferi un loc în curtea prezenței mele dumnezeiești.

Acum totuși, sufletul uman răscumpărat a devenit ca o putreziciune și o broască urâtă, topăind în mândria sa și trăind în noroi prin lascivitatea sa. Aurul, adică, posesia mea pe drept a fost luat de la mine. De aceea diavolul poate intradevăr să-mi spună: ‘Aurul pe care l-ai cumpărat nu este aur ci o broască, crescută în sânul plăcerii mele. Separă trupul de suflet și vei vedea că va zbura direct la pieptul vrăjii mele unde a fost crescut.’ Răspunsul meu către el este acesta: ‘Deoarece broasca este insuportabilă de privit, îngrozitoare la auz și otrăvitoare la atingere, nu îmi este de nici un folos și nu îmi aduce vreo bucurie însă face acestea pentru tine, în al cărui sân a fost crescută, atunci o poți avea, de vreme ce ai drept asupra ei. Și astfel când capacul este deschis, adică, atunci când sufletul este separat de trup, va zbura direct la tine, acolo unde va rămâne veșnic.’

Astfel este sufletul persoanei pe care ți-o descriu. Asemenea unei broaște ticăloase, plină de necurăție și poftă, hrănită la pieptul diavolului. Vin acum la cufăr, adică, la trupul sufletului, prin viitoarea sa moarte. Cufărul este suspendat de patru balamale care urmează să cadă în sensul că trupul său este susținut de patru lucruri, adică putere, frumusețe, înțelepciune și vedere, dintre care toate încep să îl părăsească. Când sufletul este separat de trup, va zbura direct la diavol cu al cărui lapte a fost hrănit, de vreme ce a uitat de iubirea mea luând asupra sa, spre binele lui, pedeapsa pe care o merită. Nu răspunde la iubirea mea cu iubire, ci în schimb, ia de la mine posesia mea de drept.

Datorează mai mare slujire mie care l-am răscumpărat decât oricui altcuiva, însă găsește plăcere mai multă în diavol. Sunetul rugăciunii sale îmi pare asemenea sunetului unei broaște, înfățișarea sa îmi este groaznică. Urechile sale nu vor auzi vreodată bucuria mea; otrăvitorul său simț tactil nu va cunoaște divinitatea mea în veci. Totuși, pentru că sunt îndurător, dacă cineva ar fi să-i atingă sufletul acum, deși este necurat, apoi să-l examineze ca să vadă dacă există vreo urmă de căință sau ceva bunătate în voința sa, dacă oricine ar fi să împingă în mintea sa o lanțetă ascuțită și încălzită, adică, frica de judecata mea strictă, ar putea încă să obțină harul meu, de s-ar conforma cu el. Dacă nu se află căință sau caritate întrânsul, încă ar putea fi niște speranță, cu acea condiție ca cineva să-l străpungă cu o ascuțită corecție și să îi reproșeze puternic, căci atât timp cât sufletul trăiește în trup,

îndurarea mea stă deschisă oricui.

Vezi cum am murit pentru iubire, și totuși nimeni nu mă răsplătește cu iubire, însă iau de la mine ce îmi aparține de drept. Ar fi just dacă oamenii și-ar îmbunătăți viețile în proporție cu eforturile făcute pentru a-i răscumpăra. Acum însă, oamenii vor să trăiască cu atât mai rău în proporție cu durerea pe care am suferit-o răscumpărându-i. Cu cât le arăt cât de groaznic este păcatul lor, cu atât mai obraznici vor să păcătuiască. Privește așadar, și ține seama că nu fără motiv sunt supărat: Izbutesc să schimb pentru ei voința mea bună în mânie. I-am răscumpărat de păcat, și ei se încurcă din ce în ce mai mult în păcat. Așadar, mireasa mea, dă-mi ceea ce ești îndatorată să-mi dai, adică, păstrează-ți sufletul curat pentru mine, căci am murit pentru ca tu să faci aceasta.”

Blânda întrebare a Maicii adresată miresei și răspunsul umil al miresei; apoi folositorul răspuns către mireasă și despre progresul oamenilor buni între cei ticăloși.

Cartea 1 – Capitolul 22

Maica a vorbit miresei Fiului, spunând: “Ești mireasa Fiului meu. Spune-mi la ce te gândești și ce ai dori!” Mireasa i-a răspuns: “Doamna mea, tu știi, căci toate le cunoști.” Fecioara Binecuvântată a spus: “Deși știi totul, aș vrea ca tu să îmi spui, câtă vreme cei prezenți aici ascultă.” Mireasa a spus: “Doamna mea, mă tem de două lucruri. Mai întâi,” spuse ea, “mă tem că nu deplâng păcatele mele sau fac îndreptare pentru ele atât de mult pe cât aș dori. Apoi, sunt tristă deoarece Fiul tău are mulți dușmani.”

Fecioara Maria i-a răspuns: “Îți dau trei remedii pentru prima ta grijă. În primul rând, gândește la cum toate lucrurile care au spirit, precum broaștele sau alte animale, au necazuri din când în când, deși spiritele lor nu trăiesc veșnic ci mor odată cu trupul. Totuși, spiritul tău, și fiecare suflet omenesc, veșnic trăiește. Apoi, gândește-te la îndurarea lui Dumnezeu, căci nu există nimeni atât de păcătos încât păcatul lor să nu le fie iertat, dacă numai se roagă cu hotărârea de a se îmbunătăți și cu pocăință. În al treilea rând, gândește la cât de multă glorie câștigă sufletul atunci când trăiește cu Dumnezeu și în Dumnezeu pentru totdeauna.

Îți ofer trei remedii de asemenea pentru cea de-a doua grijă, despre numeroșii dușmani ai lui Dumnezeu. Mai întâi, ia în considerare că Dumnezeu Creatorul este și judecătorul lor, și nu îl vor mai osândi vreodată, chiar dacă răbdător El le suportă răutatea pentru un timp. Apoi, amintește-ți că ei sunt fii ai pierzaniei și cât de greu și insuportabil va fi pentru ei să ardă pentru toată veșnicia. Ei sunt ticăloșii servitori care nu vor avea parte de moștenire, în timp ce copiii vor primi moștenirea. Dar poate vei spune: ‘Atunci nu ar trebui să li se propovăduiască lor?’ Desigur! Amintește-ți că oamenii buni pot fi frecvent găsiți între cei răi. Iar copiii aleși uneori se întorc de la ce este bine, asemenea fiului risipitor care a plecat spre un ținut îndepărtat și a trăit o viață rea.

Însă uneori predicând le atinge conștiința și se întorc la Tatăl, fiind bineveniți. Deci ar trebui să li se predice mai ales lor, căci, deși un predicator poate vedea doar oameni răi în fața sa, ar trebui să se gândească în sine: ‘Poate sunt unii între ei care vor deveni copii ai Domnului meu. Așadar voi propovădui lor.’ Un asemenea predicator va primi o foarte mare răsplată. În al treilea rând, ia în considerare că celor răi le este permis să continue în viață ca încercare pentru cei buni, astfel că ei exasperați de năravurile celor răi, să își câștige răsplata ca rod al răbdării. Poți înțelege aceasta mai bine printr-un exemplu. Un trandafir miroase frumos, este plăcut la vedere, blând la atingere, însă crește numai între spini care sunt ascuțiți la atingere, urâți de privit și nu dau un miros plăcut.

În mod similar oamenii buni și drepti, deși sunt blânzi prin răbdare, plăcuți în caracter și frumoși în exemplul lor bun, încă nu pot progresa sau să fie supuși testului decât între cei răi. Spinul este

uneori protecția trandafirului, astfel ca să nu fie cules înainte ca să înflorească complet. În același mod, cei răi oferă ocazia celor buni de a nu-i urma în păcat, când, din cauza răutății altora, cei buni sunt reținuți de la a se ruina prin distracție necumpătată sau orice alt păcat. Vinul nu își păstrează bine calitatea decât în drojdie, și nici oamenii buni și drepti nu pot rămâne cinstiți și să avanseze în virtuți fără ca să fie testați prin neazuri și fiind persecutați de cei nedrepti. Așadar suportă bucuroasă pe dușmanii Fiului meu. Amintește-ți că El este judecătorul lor și, dacă dreptatea cere să îi distrugă pe toți, ar putea să îi nimicească într-un moment. Tolerează-i, așadar, atât timp cât El îi tolerează!”

Scurtă descriere a vieții Sfintei Brigitta

Suedia a dăruit Europei una dintre femeile ilustre ale Evului Mediu și Bisericii creștine o mare sfântă: Sfânta Brigitta. Deși a petrecut mai mult de jumătate din viață departe de țara natală și a murit la Roma în ziua de 23 iunie 1373, inima i-a rămas totdeauna la mănăstirea din Vadstena unde i se odihnește sufletul neînsuflețit, adus aici de către fiica ei. Contemporană cu Sfânta Ecaterina de Siena, a fost consultată în probleme privind pacea între state, a lucrat intens pentru readucerea Scaunului Papal de la Avignon la Roma, a fost favorizată de daruri sufletești extraordinare și extaze pe care le-a consemnat în scris și au ajuns până la noi în cele opt volume de "Revelationes", adică "Descoperiri".

Brigitta era al șaptelea copil al unei familii înrudite cu casa regală de atunci. S-a născut la Finstad lângă vechiul oraș Uppsala în anul 1303. Tatăl ei, deși guvernator și stăpân al unor întinse și bogate domenii, era un creștin deosebit de fervent: în ținută de pelerin a vizitat locurile sfinte de la Compostella, Roma, Ierusalim; în fiecare vineri postea și se spovedea, împreună cu soția sa, distinsa și adânc credincioasa Ingeborg. La vârsta de 10 ani, Brigitta a trăit o experiență care avea să-i influențeze întreaga viață.

Faptul este acesta: după o predică despre suferințele și moartea lui Isus, mișcată până în adâncul sufletului, intră în cameră și îngenunchează în fața unui Răstignit; deși îi era frig, rămâne în rugăciune timp îndelungat; deodată aude un glas: "Brigitta, privește cât de multe răni port pe trupul meu!"; înspăimântată, ea întreabă: "Doamne, cine ți-a făcut aceasta?". "Aceasta au făcut-o toți cei care mă disprețuiesc și nesocotesc iubirea mea!".

Luminată și însuflețită de dragostea față de Cristos Răstignit se pregătește cu seriozitate pentru viața de căsătorie, spre care tatăl ei, rămas văduv, o îndemna cu grijă părintească. După împlinirea vârstei de 14 ani se cunună cu nobilul Ulf Gudmarsson și, urmând exemplul părinților, încep amândoi o viață de căsnicie creștină fericită. Au avut opt copii: patru băieți și patru fete. Pentru un anumit timp, Brigitta a fost doamnă de onoare la curtea reginei Bianca de Namur, ocupându-se în continuare de educarea copiilor săi.

Prin atitudinea ei demnă și plină de bunătate a reușit să imprime în viața de la curtea regală o notă distinsă de trăire creștină. Împreună cu soțul ei au făcut un pelerinaj la celebrul sanctuar din Spania, Compostella, unde este cinstit Sfântul Apostol Iacob; la întoarcere, Ulf se îmbolnăvește și promite că va intra la mănăstire dacă se va însănătoși. El se face bine și, cu acordul soției sale, intră în mănăstirea călugărilor cistercieni de la Alvestra, unde se află deja unul din copiii lor. Aici el moare în anul 1344 și Brigitta rămâne văduvă la vârsta de 31 de ani.

După ce rezolvă situația de viitor a copiilor săi, Brigitta îmbrățișează viața călugărească, intrând într-o mănăstire de lângă Alvestra, în apropierea mormântului soțului ei. Aici au loc primele extaze și revelații, care vor dura până la moarte și pe care, din porunca lui Isus, ea le-a scris în limba maternă; mai târziu au fost traduse în latină. Ele cuprind date importante din trecutul și prezentul Bisericii, din istoria poporului suedez, din viața Mântuitorului, de la Bethleem până la Golgota. "A trebuit, notează sfânta, să lupt mult cu nesiguranța și îndoiala dacă aceste viziuni sunt de la Dumnezeu sau de la Diavol și în rugăciune mi-am găsit liniștea".

Sub influența revelațiilor primite concepe planul unui Ordin călugăresc cu numele "Ordinul Preasfântului Mântuitor", având la bază regula Sfântului Augustin. Conform acestui plan, mănăstirea trebuia să fie dublă, adică formată din bărbați și din femei, a căror unic punct de întâlnire să fie biserica, unde să se roage împreună. După exemplul comunității apostolice, compusă din 72 ucenici și 12 apostoli cărora li s-a alăturat al treisprezecelea, Sfântul Pavel, diferitele comunități ale ordinului cuprindeau 85 de membri: 60 călugărițe, 13 călugări preoți, 4 diaconi și 8

frați laici.

Proiectul fondatoarei a fost susținut de Regele Suediei și s-a realizat în 78 de mănăstiri, răspândite în întreaga Europă, cu toată asprimea și rigiditatea regulilor impuse. Prima mănăstire, organizată chiar de Brigitta, în castelul părintesc Vadstena, a devenit locul preferat al inimii sale. Văzându-și împlinit visul și îndemnată de Isus Mântuitorul în anul 1350 părăsește Suedia și se îndreaptă spre Roma cu trei dintre copii săi (Carol, Birger și Ecaterina), pentru a se întâlni cu Sfântul Părinte Papa și a obține aprobarea Ordinului întemeiat de ea și pentru a câștiga indulgența anului jubiliar 1350. Pentru Brigitta începe perioada peregrinărilor la locurile sfinte, la casele domnitoare, la locuințele marilor păstori ai Bisericii.

De când urmașul Sfântului Petru părăsise Roma și își fixase reședința la Avignon, Orașul Etern devenise un târg neîngrijit, astfel că oile ajungeau până la altarul Sfântului Petru, iar străzile se transformau zilnic în câmpuri de bătălie. Pelerinii nu mai erau siguri de avutul și de viața lor. Brigitta, cu spiritul întreprinzător și ordonat al nordicilor, reușește să se impună și contribuie la crearea unor condiții mai bune pentru primirea pelerinilor, îndeosebi a celor veniți din Suedia. În timpul epidemiei care a secerat aproape jumătate din populația Italiei, nu se sfiește să intre chiar și în barăcile morții pentru a aduce un mic ajutor material și spiritual.

Unul dintre copiii ei, Carol, sfârșește în acest flagel. După încetarea epidemiei, împreună cu Ecaterina și Birger vizitează Ierusalimul. La întoarcere, sfârșită de oboseală și de emoția copleșitoare a întâlnirii cu locurile sfinte contemplate adesea în extazele ei, în ziua de 23 iulie 1373 încheie pelerinajul vieții pământești. Fiica sa Ecaterina îi duce trupul la Vadstena, preia conducerea Ordinului Preasfântului Mântuitor și se întoarce la Roma, unde urmărește procesul de canonizare a mamei sale. Brigitta a fost declarată Sfântă în anul 1391, la 18 ani după moarte și proclamată "Patroană a Suediei Catolice".

Cele 15 Rugăciuni Revelate Sfintei Brigitta

Sfânta Brigitta L-a rugat multă vreme pe Domnul să-i spună câte lovituri a primit în timpul amarelor Sale suferințe. Într-o zi Mântuitorul i-a apărut și i-a zis: “Am primit în Trupul Meu 5480 de lovituri; dacă vrei să le cinstești, să spui de 15 ori Tatăl nostru și de 15 ori Bucură-te Marie, în fiecare zi, timp de un an. După ce s-a încheiat acest an, tu ai cinstit fiecare dintre aceste 5480 de lovituri.” (apoi a învățat-o cele 15 rugăciuni meditative corespunzătoare)

1. Patimile lui Cristos pe Muntele Măslinilor, până la încoronarea cu spini

1 Tatăl nostru...

(Tatăl nostru care ești în ceruri, sfințească-se numele Tău, vie împărăția Ta, facă-se voia ta, precum în cer așa și pe pământ. Pâinea noastră cea de toate zilele, dă-ne-o nouă astăzi și ne iartă nouă greșelile noastre precum și noi iertăm greșiților noștri și nu ne duce pe noi în ispită ci ne izbăvește de cel rău. Amin.)

1 Bucură-te Marie...

(Bucură-te; Marie, cea plină de har, Domnul este cu tine, binecuvântată ești tu între femei, și binecuvântat este rodul trupului tău Isus. Sfântă Marie, Maica lui Dumnezeu, roagă-te pentru noi păcătoșii, acum și în ceasul morții noastre. Amin.)

O Isuse, desfătarea tuturor acelora care Te iubesc, Tu Prieten și Mântuitor al păcătoșilor! Adu-Ți aminte de adâncă tulburare pe care ai suferit-o, atunci când s-a apropiat timpul hotărât încă din veșnicie al Sfintelor Tale Patimi, când ai spălat picioarele Apostolilor Tăi, le-ai oferit Trupul și Sângele Tău drept hrană, I-ai mângâiat cu blândețe și ai mărturisit apoi în plinătatea tristeții: “Sufletul Meu e cuprins de o întristare de moarte...”. Adu-Ți aminte de tot chinul și strămtorarea suferite înainte de moartea Ta pe Cruce, când după ce Te-ai rugat de trei ori în sudoare însângerată de frică, ai fost trădat de apostolul Tău, ai fost prins de poporul Tău, învinuit prin minciună, condamnat pe nedrept de judecătorii Tăi, prigonit deși erai nevinovat, în orasul ales aflat în mare sărbătoare, jefuit de hainele Tale, bătut cu pumnii, legat de o coloană și biciuit, încoronat cu spini și batjocorit în nenumărate alte feluri. Prin aceste Patimi, dăruiește-mi o Doamne Dumnezeul meu, căință adevărată, ispășire vrednică și iertarea tuturor păcatelor mele.

2. Batjocorirea lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, bucuria Îngerilor! Adu-Ți aminte de măhnirea suferită atunci când toți dușmanii Tăi Te-au înconjurat ca niște lei turbati, Te-au bătut cu pumnii și Te-au scuipat în față. Prin aceste chinuri și prin ocările nelegiuite cu care Te-au încolțit dușmanii tăi, mântuiește-mă de toți dușmanii mei văzuți și nevăzuți. Ajută-mă să ajung, prin ocrotirea Ta, la mântuirea veșnică.

3. Răstignirea lui Cristos pe Cruce

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Creatorul acestei lumi, care cuprinzi în nemărginirea Ta Cerul și pământul! Adu-Ți aminte de amarnicele dureri suferite atunci când călăii cei cruzi Ți-au străpuns mâinile și picioarele cu cuie ascuțite răstignindu-Te pe Cruce. Adunând durere peste durere, ei Ți-au întins membrele în lungul și în latul Crucii cu atâta violență, încât au fost smulse din încheieturi. Prin acest chin amarnic de pe Cruce, Te rog să-mi dăruiești o sfântă frică și iubire pentru Numele Tău cel sfânt.

4. Rugăciunea lui Cristos pentru cei care L-au răstignit

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Tămăduitorule ceresc! Adu-Ți aminte de slăbiciunea morții și de durerile pe care, înălțat pe lemnul Crucii, le-ai suferit în toate măduarele Tale rănite și sfâșiate, astfel că nici o durere nu s-a asemănat cu a Ta. Din creștetul capului până în tălpile picioarelor nu se putea găsi nimic nevătămat la Tine, dar fără să iei în seamă aceste chinuri, Tu Te-ai rugat pentru dușmanii Tăi: “Tată, iartă-i că nu știu ce fac!”. În îndurarea Ta, îngăduie ca amintirea cumplitelor Tale Patimi să-mi slujească la deplina iertare a tuturor păcatelor și rătăcirilor mele.

5. Îndurarea lui Cristos față de păcătosul în căință

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, oglinda limpezimii eterne! Adu-Ți aminte de acea mahnire care Ți-a strâns Inima atunci când, în lumina întregii Tale înțelepciuni, ai văzut viitorul fericit al aleșilor care vor afla mântuirea prin meritele Patimilor Tale, dar și osânda atâtor nelegiuți, care din vina lor se vor prăbuși în veșnica pierzanie. Prin adâncul de nepătruns al Îndurării Tale, în care ai simțit o milă atât de profundă pentru noi păcătoșii și rătăciții, milă pe care ai arătat-o și tâlharului de lângă Tine atunci când i-ai spus: “Astăzi vei fi cu Mine în Rai”, Te rog să-mi arăți și mie îndurare în ceasul morții.

6. Testamentul lui Cristos pe Cruce

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Rege și Prieten al sufletului, care singur ești vrednic de toată iubirea și de tot dorul! Adu-Ți aminte de durerea simțită atunci când, părăsit de toți prietenii Tăi, atârnai pe Cruce, în goliciune și mizerie, negăsind nici o mângâiere în afară de iubita Ta Mamă, care, în amărăciunea sufletului său, Ți stătea alături în sfântă fidelitate. Tu ai încredințat-o Apostolului Tău și I l-ai dat pe el ca fiu în locul Tău, spunând: “Femeie, iată fiul tău”, iar Apostolului “Iată Mama Ta”. Pentru sabia durerii care I-a străpuns atunci sufletul, Te rog, o bune Isuse, să-mi daruiești în toate strâmtorările trupului și ale sufletului, mai ales în ceasul morții, îndurarea și mângâierea Ta.

7. Setea lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Izvor al bunătății nesecate, care ai spus: “Mi-e sete”, dintr-o adâncă dorință după mântuirea neamului omenesc, aprinde în inimile noastre dorul după toate practicile adevăratei virtuți. Stinge în noi pe deplin toate poftele simțurilor, toate plăcerile rele și toată setea de desfătare.

8. Băutura lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, bucuria de nestins a sufletelor dăruite Ție! Prin amărăciunea oțetului cu fiere pe care l-ai gustat pentru mine, dă-mi harul să Te primesc cu vrednicie în ceasul morții, spre mântuirea și mângâierea sufletului meu.

9. Strigătul înfricoșat al lui Cristos pe Cruce

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Dumnezeule, care ești putere stăpânitoare și bucurie a sufletului! Adu-Ți aminte de chinul și strâmtorarea suferite atunci când, apropiindu-se cumplita Ta moarte, ai strigat cu glas puternic: “Dumnezeul Meu, Dumnezeul Meu, pentru ce M-ai părăsit?”. Prin această spaimă a părăsirii aparente, prin care ne-ai mântuit de părăsirea eternă, Te rog Doamne, Dumnezeul nostru, să nu mă părăsești niciodată în strâmtorările mele.

10. Multele răni ale lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, început și sfârșit, putere și viață! Adu-Ți aminte că Tu Te-ai cufundat pentru noi din creștet și până în tălpi în marea suferințelor. Prin mărimea și adâncimea rănilor Tale dureroase, învață-mă pe mine cel cufundat în păcat, să urmez cu adevărată ascultare plină de iubire poruncile Tale.

11. Adâncile răni ale lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, abis de îndurare! Pentru adâncimea rănilor Tale, care Ți-au pătruns până la măduva oaselor, Te rog să mă scoți din abisul păcatelor mele. Ascunde sufletul meu în sfintele Tale răni, din fața mâniei Tale care pedepsește, ca să nu fiu găsit de dreptatea Ta.

12. Sângerândeale răni ale lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, imagine strălucitoare a Adevărului, semn al unității și legătură a iubirii! Adu-ți aminte de nenumăratele răni care Ți-au acoperit tot trupul și l-au înroșit cu Sângele Tău Sfânt. Adu-Ți aminte de suferințele de neînchipuit pe care le-ai îndurat pentru noi în acest Trup preasfânt. Ce ai fi putut să faci mai mult decât ai făcut? Te rog o bune Isuse, să scrii cu prețiosul Tău Sânge toate aceste răni în inima mea, pentru ca să citesc mereu în ea Patima și moartea Ta, și să-Ți rămân recunoscător și credincios până la sfârșit.

13. Cea din urmă spaimă a lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Rege nemuritor și neînvins! Adu-Ți aminte de durerile suferite atunci când Te-au părăsit cu desăvârșire toate puterile trupului și ai spus cu capul aplecat: “S-a săvârșit!”. Prin această spaimă de

moarte, îndură-Te de mine în ceasul din urmă, când sufletul meu va fi strâmtorat, iar spiritul meu aplecat în umilință.

14. Moartea lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, Unule Născut al Preamăritului Tată, Chipul și asemănarea înțelepciunii Sale! Adu-Ți aminte de acea dăruire plină de duioșie cu care ai strigat: “Tată, în mâinile Tale Îmi încredințez Sufletul!”. Apoi, cu Trupul sfâșiat, cu Inima zdrobită, ai desăvârșit îndurarea Ta asupra noastră și astfel Ți-ai dat Sufletul. Prin această moarte prețioasă, Te rog pe Tine Isuse, ascultător până la moarte, întărește-mă în lupta împotriva lui satan, a lumii și a cărnii. Ajută-mă să mor pentru lume și să trăiesc pentru Tine. Primește sufletul meu cu iubire îndurătoare, atunci când, în ceasul morții, se va întoarce din pelerinajul său.

15. Cea din urmă și deplină sângerare a lui Cristos

1 Tatăl nostru...

1 Bucură-te Marie...

O Isuse, viță adevărată și roditoare în care suntem sădiți! Adu-Ți aminte de acea revărsare deplină a Sângelui Tău, pe care l-ai vărsat asemenea mustului din strugurele zdrobit, atunci, când ai lăsat să izvorască din Coasta Ta deschisă prin lance, Sânge și Apă cu atâta abundență, încât nu a mai rămas nici o picătură, în timp ce Trupul Tău cel Sfânt atârna sus pe Cruce. Prin această vărsare a Sângelui Tău, întărește-mi sufletul în ultima luptă a morții și lasă-l să apară înaintea Ta, curățit de toate petele.

Rugăciune de încheiere

Primește Isuse această rugăciune, în acea iubire imensă cu care ai îndurat pentru noi toate rănila Sfântului Tău Trup. Îndură-Te de mine și de toți cei împovărați de păcat. Dăruiește tuturor sufletelor credincioase, atât celor din viață cât și celor adormite, îndurare și viața veșnică. Amin!

Profețiile și Revelațiile Sfintei Brigitta de Suedia

Canonizarea Sfintei Brigitta a fost confirmată de Papa Boniface IX și de Papa Martin V

Domnul Dumnezeu să vă binecuvânteze!

Suntem trei călugări care și-au dedicat viața pentru a-l iubi pe Dumnezeu mai presus de toate, pentru a trăi în castitate, să fim umili și să răspândim cuvintele lui Isus în toată lumea. Misiunea noastră este să adunăm frați și surori care au bunăvoința să călătorească și să predice Biblia și aceste Sfinte Revelații. Vă rugăm puneți o legătură paginei noastre de web principale și spuneți tuturor prietenilor și rudelor despre misiunea noastră, căci aceste Revelații sunt utile pentru suflet. Dacă sunteți predicator sperăm și ne rugăm că veți predica aceste cuvinte venite de la Duhul Sfânt întregii dumneavoastră congregații. De asemenea vă rugăm cu umilință pe toți să faceți copii a acestor volume și să le oferiți gratuit tuturor fraților și surorilor dumneavoastră. Vă rugăm și să puneți copii a acestor minunate revelații peste tot, pe uși, copaci și alte locuri unde acestea pot fi vizibile pentru toți pentru a salva cât mai multe suflete posibil pentru Domnul nostru Isus Cristos.

Matei 12:30 "Cine nu este cu Mine, este împotriva Mea, și cine nu strânge cu Mine, risipește."

Căutăm translații binevoitori care au abilitatea să facă o traducere bună în alte limbi. Căutăm de asemenea pe cineva care poate face o carte audio în mp3. Dorim să avem traducerea în cel puțin 50 de limbi într-o bună zi cu ajutorul dumneavoastră, cititorul. Vă rugăm ajutați-ne să găsim mai multe cărți a Revelațiilor Sfintei Brigitta în alte limbi. Acela sau aceea va fi răsplătit foarte mult de către Domnul nostru ISUS CRISTOS.

Dacă doriți întradevăr să fiți salvați nu trebuie să vă opriți din cititul acestor revelații venite de la Dumnezeu ci trebuie să citiți din ele în fiecare zi până în ziua morții căci diavolul va face tot ce îi stă în putință să vă oprească din cititul acestor revelații pentru ca astfel să uitați de ele și să cădeți înapoi în păcat.

Nu uitați să faceți copii a acestor minunate revelații pentru ca să le aveți mereu în mâinile dumneavoastră în cazul în care mai marele dezastre -despre care Sfânta Biblie ne avertizează- vor veni, astfel că nu veți depinde de faptul că electricitatea trebuie mereu să fie disponibilă.

Această carte este o oglindă în care sufletul își poate vedea petele și poate învăța ce este plăcut în fața lui Dumnezeu și ceea ce este neplăcut. Citiți această carte din nou și din nou și veți învăța cum trebuie să iubiți pe Dumnezeu și pe aproapele dumneavoastră, să disprețuiți ceea ce este pământesc și trecător, luptându-vă pentru cele veșnice și dumnezeiești, răbdând de dragul lui Cristos nenorocirile acestei lumi și disprețuind prosperitatea și ispitele ei, mulțumind lui Dumnezeu în boală, să nu ne mândrim cu sănătatea noastră, să nu devenim îngâmfați în bunăstare, nici să nu ne descurajăm în necazuri.

Sfânta Brigitta s-a născut într-o familie nobilă și înstărită. Trăind în credință în conformitate cu Domnul nostru Isus Cristos familia ei a dat o mare parte din avere pentru ridicarea bisericilor și a mănăstirilor și de asemeni pentru săraci. La vârsta de 10 ani a trăit o experiență ce avea să-i influențeze întreaga viață: după o predică despre suferințele și moartea lui Isus, mișcată până în adâncul sufletului, intră în cameră și îngenunchează în fața unui crucifix; deși îi este frig, rămâne în rugăciune timp îndelungat și deodată aude un glas: "Brigitta, privește cât de multe răni port pe Trupul Meu!" Însăpăimântată, ea întreabă: "Doamne, cine Ți-a făcut aceasta?" Domnul i-a răspuns "Aceasta au făcut-o toți cei care Mă disprețuiesc și nesocotesc iubirea Mea!"

La 31 de ani Brigitta rămâne văduvă. După ce rezolvă situația de viitor a copiilor săi, Brigitta îmbrățișează viața călugărească, intrând într-o mănăstire lângă Alvestra și donând restul bunurilor pe care le deținea, săracilor. Aici au loc primele extaze și revelații, care vor dura până la moarte, și pe care, din porunca lui Isus, le-a scris în limba maternă; mai târziu au fost traduse în limba latina totalizând opt volume cu titlul: "Revelationes". Toate profețiile revelate ei s-au îndeplinit până în ziua de azi și încă mai sunt câteva care la timpul lor se vor îndeplini. Una din cele mai importante

profeții este despre regatele Angliei și Franței. Domnul nostru Isus Cristos îi spune dinainte Sfintei Brigitta că războiul dintre aceste două țări se va sfârși prin căsătoria copiilor regilor douăzeci de ani mai târziu.

Vă rugăm faceți o donație pentru a ne ajuta să răspândim Revelațiile și Profetiile Sfintei Brigitta (Birgitta) de Suedia în toată lumea pentru a salva sufletele iubiților noștri frați și surori. Avem nevoie de asemenea și de rugăciunile dumneavoastră!

Pentru a putea atinge acest scop cu ajutorul dumneavoastră avem nevoie de bani pentru a face anunțuri publicitare în diferite reviste creștine și de asemenea să tipărim cărți pentru a le vinde în diferite limbi și multe altele.

Este scris: “Și oricine va da de băut numai un pahar de apă rece unuia din acești micuți, în numele unui ucenic, adevărat vă spun că nu-și va pierde răsplata.”

[Avem nevoie de ajutorul dumneavoastră, faceți o donație aici vă rugăm.](#)

Domnul Dumnezeu să vă binecuvânteze pe toți!

Vă rugăm contactați-ne la: romanian@prophecyfilm.com (Dacă puteți, scrieți în engleză vă rugăm.)

The Prophecies and Revelations of
Saint Bridget (Birgitta) of Sweden

Book 1

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ to His chosen and dearly beloved bride, Saint Bridget, about the proclamation of His most holy Incarnation and the rejection, desecration and abandonment of our faith and baptism, and how He bids His beloved bride and all Christian people to love Him.

Chapter 1

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth, one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am the one who spoke to the patriarchs and the prophets and the one whom they awaited. For the sake of their longing and in agreement with my promise, I assumed flesh without sin and concupiscence, by entering the womb of the Virgin like the sun shining through the clearest gem. For just as the sun does not damage the glass by entering it, likewise the virginity of the Virgin was not lost when I assumed Manhood. I assumed flesh in such a way that I did not have to forsake my Divinity, and I was no less God - with the Father and the Holy Spirit, governing and upholding all things - although I was in the womb of the Virgin in my human nature. Just as brightness is never separated from fire, so too, my Divinity was never separated from my Humanity, not even in death.

Thereafter I allowed my pure and sinless body to be wounded from the foot to the head, and to be crucified for all the sins of mankind. That same body is now offered each day on the altar so that mankind might love me more and remember my great deeds more

often. But now I am totally forgotten, neglected, despised, and expelled as a king is from his own kingdom and in whose place the most wicked robber has been elected and honored.

I have indeed wanted my kingdom to be within man, and by right I should be King and Lord over him, for I made him and redeemed him. However, now he has broken and desecrated the faith which he promised me in his baptism, and he has broken and spurned my laws and commandments which I prescribed and revealed to him. He loves his own will and refuses to hear me. In addition, he exalts the most wicked robber, the devil, above me and has given him his faith. The devil really is a robber, since he steals for himself, by way of evil temptations, bad councils, and false promises, the human soul that I redeemed with my blood. But he does not do this because he is mightier than me; for I am so mighty that I can do all things with a word, and so just, that even if all the saints asked me, I would not do the least thing against justice.

But, since man, who has been given free will, willfully rejects my commandments and obeys the devil, it is only right that he also experiences his tyranny and malice. This devil was created good by me, but fell by his own wicked will, and has become, so to speak, my servant for inflicting vengeance on the workers of evil.

Yet, even though I am now so despised, I am still so merciful that whoever prays for my mercy and humbles himself in amendment shall be forgiven his sins, and I shall save him from the evil robber - the devil. But to those who continue despising me, I shall visit my justice upon them, so that those hearing it will tremble, and those who feel it will say: "Woe, that we were ever conceived or born! Woe, that we ever provoked the Lord of majesty to wrath!"

But you, my daughter, whom I have chosen for myself, and with whom I now speak in spirit: love me with all your heart - not as you love your son or daughter or parents, but more than anything in the world - since I, who created you, did not spare any of my limbs in suffering for your sake! Yet, I love your soul so dearly that, rather than losing you, I would let myself be crucified again, if it were possible.

Imitate my humility; for I, the King of glory and of angels, was clothed in ugly, wretched rags and stood naked at the pillar and heard all kinds of insults and ridicule with my own ears. Always prefer my will before your own, because my Mother, your Lady, has, from the beginning to the end, never wanted anything but what I wanted.

If you do this, then your heart shall be with my heart, and it will be inflamed by my love in the same way that anything dry becomes rapidly inflamed by fire. Your soul shall be so inflamed and filled with me, and I will be in you, so that everything worldly becomes bitter to you and all fleshly lusts like poison. You will rest in the arms of my Divinity, where no fleshly desires exist, but only spiritual delight and joy which fill the delighted soul with happiness - inwardly and outwardly - so that it thinks of nothing and desires nothing but the joy which it possesses. So love me alone, and you will have all the things you want, and you will have them in abundance. Is it not written that the oil of the widow did not decrease until the day the rain was sent to earth by God according to the words of the prophet? I am the true prophet! If you believe my words and follow and fulfill them, the oil - joy and jubilation - shall never decrease for you for all eternity.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to his daughter - whom He now had taken as His bride - about the articles of the true faith, and about what kind of adornments, tokens and desires the bride must have in order to please the Bridegroom.

Chapter 2

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the sea and of all the things that are in them. I am one with the Father and the Holy Spirit - not like the gods of stone nor the gods of gold, as were used by people of old, and not several gods, as people once thought - but one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons but one in divine nature, the Creator of all but created by none, unchangeable and almighty, everlasting - without beginning or end. I am the one who was born of the Virgin, without losing my Divinity but joining it to my Manhood, so that I, in one person, should be the true Son of God and

the Son of the Virgin. I am the one who hung on the cross and died and was buried, yet my Divinity remained unharmed. For even though I died in the Manhood and flesh that I, the only Son, had assumed, yet I lived on in my Divinity, being one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am the same one who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and who now speaks with you in my Spirit. I have chosen you and taken you to myself as my bride in order to show you the ways of the world and my divine secrets, for this pleases me. You are also mine by right; for when your husband died, you entrusted all your will into my hands and, after his death, you also thought and prayed about how you should become poor and abandon all things for my sake. For this reason, you are mine by right because of this great love of yours, and I will provide for you because of this.

Therefore, I take you to myself as my bride and for my own pleasure, the kind that is becoming for God to have with a chaste soul. It is the obligation of the bride to be ready when the bridegroom wants to celebrate the wedding so that she will be properly dressed and pure. You purify yourself well if your thoughts are always on your sins, on how I cleansed you in baptism from the sin of Adam, and how often I have been patient and supported you when you fell into sin. The bride should also have the insignia of her bridegroom on her chest, which means that you should observe and take heed of the favors and good deeds which I have done for you: such as how nobly I created you by giving you a soul and body, how nobly I enriched you by giving you health and temporal things, how lovingly and sweetly I redeemed you when I died for you and restored your heavenly inheritance to you - if you want to have it. The bride should also do the will of the Bridegroom. But what is my will, except that you should want to love me above all things and not desire anything but me?

I created all things for the sake of mankind, and placed all things under his authority, but he loves all things except me, and hates nothing but me. I bought back the inheritance for him which he had lost because of his sin. But he is so foolish and without reason that he prefers this passing glory - which is like the foam of the sea that rises up for a moment like a mountain, and then quickly falls down to nothing - instead of eternal glory in which there is everlasting good.

But if you, my bride, desire nothing but me, if you despise all things for my sake - not only your children and relatives, but also honor and riches - I will give you the most precious and lovely reward! I will not give you gold or silver, but myself, to be your Bridegroom and reward - I, who am the King of Glory. But if you are ashamed of being poor and despised, then consider how I, your God, walked before you, when my servants and friends abandoned me in the world; for I was not seeking earthly friends, but heavenly friends. And if you now are troubled and afraid about the burden and difficulty of work and sickness, then consider how difficult and painful it is to burn in hell! What would you not deserve if you had offended an earthly master as you have me? For even though I love you with all my heart, still I do not act against justice in the least point.

Therefore, as you have sinned in all your limbs, so shall you also make satisfaction and penance in every limb. But, because of your good will and your purpose of atoning for your sins, I shall change my justice into mercy by foregoing painful punishment for but a little penance. Therefore, embrace and take upon yourself a little work, so that you may be made clean of sin and reach the great reward sooner. For the bride should grow tired working alongside her bridegroom so that she may all the more confidently take her rest with him.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words of wisdom to His bride about how she should love and honor Him, the Bridegroom, and about how the evil love the world and hate God.

Chapter 3

“I am your God and Lord, whom you worship and honor. I am the one who upholds heaven and earth with my power; they are not upheld by any pillars or anything else. I am the one who is handled and offered up each day on the altar under the appearance of bread as true God and true man. I am the same one who has chosen you. Honor my Father! Love me! Obey my Spirit! Honor my Mother as your

Lady! Honor all my saints! Keep the true faith which you shall learn by him who experienced within himself the battle of the two spirits - the spirit of falsehood and the spirit of truth - and with my help won. Maintain true humility. What is true humility if not to behave as one really is, and to give praise to God for the good things he has given us?

But now, there are many who hate me and my deeds, and who account my words as sorrow and vanity, but instead, with affection and love, embrace the whoremonger: the devil. Whatever they do for my sake is done with grumbling and bitterness. They would not even confess my name or serve me, if they did not fear the opinion of other men. They love the world with such fervor that they never tire of working for it night and day, always burning with their love for it. Their service is as pleasing to me as that of someone who gives his enemy money to kill his own son! This is what they do to me. They give me some alms and honor me with their lips in order to gain worldly success and to remain in their honor and in their sin. The good spirit is therefore hindered in them and they are prevented from making any progress in doing good.

However, if you want to love me with all your heart and to desire nothing but me, I will draw you to myself through love, just as a magnet draws iron to itself. I will place you on my arm, which is so strong that no one can stretch it out, and so firm that, once outstretched, no one is able to bend it back, and is so sweet that it surpasses every fragrance and is beyond comparison to any sweet thing or delight of this world.

EXPLANATION

This man, who was the teacher of the bride of Christ, was the holy theologian and canon of Linköping, named Master Mathias of Sweden. He wrote an excellent commentary on the whole Bible. He was ingenuously tempted by the devil with many heresies against the Catholic faith. However, he overcame all of them with the help of Christ and could not be conquered by the devil, as is shown in the written biography of Saint Bridget. It was this Master Mathias who

composed the prologue to these books which begins thus: “Stupor et mirabilia,” etc. He was a holy man with great spiritual power in both word and deed. When he died in Sweden, the bride of Christ was living in Rome. While she was praying, she heard a voice saying to her in spirit: “Happy are you, Master Mathias, for the crown that has been prepared for you in heaven! Come now to the wisdom that will never end!”

One may also read more about Master Mathias in this Book (in chapter 52), in Book V (in the answer to question 3 in the last interrogation), and in Book VI (chapters 75 and 89).

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to His bride about how she should not fear or think that the revelations told to her by Him come from an evil spirit, and about how to discern an evil spirit from a good one.

Chapter 4

“I am your Creator and Redeemer. Why did you fear and doubt my words? Why did you wonder whether they came from a good or an evil spirit? Tell me, what have you found in my words that your conscience did not tell you to do? Or have I ever commanded you anything against reason?

The bride answered: “No, all you told me was completely true and reasonable and I was badly mistaken.” The Bridegroom, Jesus, answered her: “I showed you three things from which you could recognize the good spirit: I invited you to honor your God, who made you and gave you all the good things you have; your reason also tells you to honor him above all things. I further invited you to keep the true faith, that is, to believe that nothing has been created without God nor may be made without God. I also invited you to love reasonable work and continence in all things, for the world was created for man's sake, in order that he may use it according to his reasonable needs, and not in excess.

In the same way, you may also recognize the unclean spirit, the devil, from three opposing things: He tempts and advises you to seek and desire your own praise, and to be proud of the things given you. He also tempts you into unbelief and intemperance in all your limbs and in all things, and makes your heart inflamed by them. Sometimes he also deceives men under the guise of a good spirit. This is why I commanded you to always examine your conscience and reveal it to spiritual men of wisdom!

Therefore, do not doubt that the good spirit of God is with you when you desire nothing but God and are completely inflamed by him! Only I can do this, and it is impossible for the devil to come near you then. He also cannot come near to any evil man unless I allow it, either because of his sins, or some secret judgment that is known only to me. For he is my creature like all other things - he was created good by me, but made himself evil by his own malice – therefore, I am Lord over him.

Therefore, those who accuse me do so falsely when they say that those who serve me with great and godly devotion are insane and possessed by the devil. They consider me to be like a man who gives his chaste and trusting wife over to adultery. Such a one should I be, if I allowed a righteous and God-loving man to be handed over to the devil! But because I am faithful, the devil will never rule over the soul of any man who devoutly serves me. Although my friends sometimes seem to be insane or senseless, it is not because the devil is tormenting them, or because they serve me with fervent and godly devotion. It is rather because of some defect or weakness in the brain, or some other hidden reason, which serves to humble them. It may also happen, sometimes, that the devil receives power from me over the bodies of good men for the sake of their future reward, or that he darkens their consciences. But he can never rule the souls of those who have faith in me and who love me.

The loving words of Christ to His bride in the wonderful parable of a lovely castle, which signifies the holy Church militant, and about how the Church of God will be rebuilt by the prayers of the glorious Virgin and of the saints.

Chapter 5

“I am the Creator of all things - I, the King of Glory and the Lord of Angels! I built for myself a lovely castle and placed my chosen men in it, but my enemies undermined the foundation and overpowered my friends so much so that the marrow is violently forced out of my friends’ feet as they sit chained to the wooden stocks. Their mouth is beaten by stones, and they are tortured by hunger and thirst. Moreover, enemies are persecuting their Lord! My friends are now praying with tears and groans for help, and justice is calling for vengeance, but mercy says to forgive.

Then God said to his heavenly host that stood around him: “What do you think about these who have conquered my castle?” They all answered as with one voice: “O Lord, all justice is in you, and in you we see all things. You are without beginning and without end, the Son of God, and all judgment is given to you. You are their judge.” He answered: “Although you know and see all things in me, still for the sake of my bride who stands here, tell me the just sentence.” They said: “This is justice: that those who undermined the wall should be punished as thieves, that those who persist in evil should be punished as intruders and violent criminals, and that those who are captive should be freed and the hungry be filled.”

Then Mary, the Mother of God (who until now had remained silent) spoke: “Oh, my Lord and most dear Son, You were in my womb as true God and man. By your grace you sanctified me, who was but an earthen vessel. I beg you, have mercy on them once more!” Then the Lord answered His Mother: “Blessed be the words of your mouth that ascend like a sweet fragrance to God. You are the Queen and glory of angels and all saints because, by you, God and all the saints are made happy! Because your will was as my own from the beginning of your youth, I will do as you wish once more.”

Then He said to the host of saints: “Because you have fought manfully, and for the sake of your love, I will let myself be appeased

for now. Behold, I will rebuild my wall because of your prayers. I will liberate and heal those who were oppressed by force, and honor them a hundredfold for the indignity they have endured. But if the violators and wrong-doers pray for my mercy, I will give them peace and mercy. However, those who despise my mercy will feel my justice.”

Then he said to his bride: “My bride, I have chosen you and brought you into my Spirit. You hear my words and those of my saints. Although the saints see all things in me, nevertheless, they have spoken for your sake so that you might understand, since you, who are still in the flesh, cannot see all things in me in the same way as they who are spirits. I will now also show you what all these things signify.

The castle I spoke about previously is the Holy Church and the souls of Christians, which I built with my own blood and that of the saints. I cemented and joined it with my love and placed my friends and chosen men in it. The foundation is true faith, that is, to believe that I am a righteous and merciful judge.

Now, however, this foundation is undermined because all believe and preach that I am merciful, but almost no one preaches or believes me to be a righteous judge. They view me as an unjust judge! Unjust and unrighteous, indeed, would the judge be who, out of mercy, allowed the unrighteous to go unpunished, so that they could oppress the righteous even more! But I am a righteous and merciful judge; for I do not let even the least sin go unpunished, nor the least good go unrewarded. By the undermining of this wall’s foundation, there entered into the Holy Church people who sin without fear, who deny that I am a righteous judge, and who torment my friends as severely as those who are placed in the stocks. My friends have no joy or consolation given to them but, instead, every kind of mockery and torment are inflicted upon them as if they were possessed by the devil. When they tell the truth about me, they are rejected and accused of lying. They have a fervent desire to hear or speak the truth about me, but there is no one who listens to them or speaks the truth to them. And I, the Lord and Creator of all things, am being blasphemed and rejected, for they say: ‘We do not know if he is God and, if he is God, we do not care!’ They overthrow my banner and trample it under their

feet calling out: ‘Why did he suffer? What benefit is it to us? If he wants to satisfy our lust and will, it is enough for us. He may keep his kingdom and heaven!’ I want to go into them, but they say: ‘We would rather die before giving up our own will!’

Behold, my bride, what kind of people they are! I made them, and could destroy and damn them with a word if I wanted to. How bold and arrogant they are toward me! But because of the prayers of my Mother and of all the saints, I am still so merciful and patient that I will send them the words of my mouth and offer them my mercy. If they want to accept it, I will be appeased. Otherwise, they will come to know my justice and be publicly humiliated like thieves in front of all angels and men, and be judged by every one of them. For just as the men who are hanged on gallows are devoured by ravens, they will also be devoured by demons, yet not die. Just as those who are punished in the stocks have no rest, they too, will have pain and bitterness all around them. The most burning river will flow into their mouths, but their bellies will not be filled, and their punishment will be renewed each day.

But my friends will be redeemed and consoled by the words that come from my mouth. They will see my justice joined with my mercy. I will clothe them in the weapons of my love and make them so strong that the adversaries of the faith will fall back like filth and feel ashamed for all eternity when they see my justice. Yes, they will surely be ashamed for having abused my patience.”

The words of Christ to His bride about how His Spirit cannot remain with the unrighteous, and about the separation of the unrighteous from the good, and how good men, armed with spiritual weapons, are sent to war against the world.

Chapter 6

“My enemies are like the most violent beasts that can never be filled or have rest. Their heart is so empty of my love that they never allow the thought of my suffering into it; and not once has a word like

this been uttered by their inmost heart: “O Lord, you have redeemed us, may you be praised for your bitter suffering!” How could my Spirit remain with the people who have no divine love for me, and who willingly betray others in order to satisfy their own will? Their heart is full of vile worms, that is, full of worldly desires. The devil has left his filth in their mouths, and that is why my words do not please them.

Therefore, I will sever them from my friends with my saw, and just as there is no more bitter way to die than to be sawn asunder, so there will not be a punishment in which they will not partake. They will be sawn in two by the devil and separated from me! They are so abhorrent to me that all who cling to them and agree with them will also be severed from me.

Therefore, I send out my friends in order that they might separate the devils from my members, for they are truly my enemies. I send my friends like knights to war. Anyone who mortifies and subdues his flesh and abstains from forbidden things is my true knight. For their lance, they will have the words that I spoke with my own mouth and, in their hands, the sword of the true faith. Their breasts will be covered with the armor of love, so that no matter what happens to them, they will love me no less. They shall have the shield of patience at their side, so that they may suffer and endure all things patiently. I have enclosed them like gold in a vessel; they should now go forth and walk in my ways.

According to the ways of justice, I could not enter into the glory of majesty without suffering tribulation in my human nature, so then, how else will they enter into it? If their Lord endured pain and suffering, it is not surprising that they also suffer. If their Lord endured beatings and torture, it is not too much for them to endure words and contradictions. They should not fear, for I will never abandon them. Just as it is impossible for the devil to touch and divide the heart of God, so it is impossible for the devil to separate them from me. And since they are like the purest gold in my sight, I will never abandon them, even though they are tested with a little fire, for the fire is given to them for their greater reward and happiness.

The words of the glorious Virgin to Saint Bridget about how to dress and with what kind of clothes and ornaments her daughter should be adorned and clothed.

Chapter 7

“I am Mary who gave birth to the Son of God, true God and true man. I am the Queen of Angels. My son loves you with all of his heart. Therefore, you should love him. You should be adorned with the most proper clothes, and I will show you how and what kind they should be. Just as before you had an undershirt, a shirt, shoes, a cloak, and a brooch on your chest, so now you shall have spiritual clothes.

The undershirt you shall have is contrition for your sins; for just as an undershirt is closest to the body, so contrition and confession are the first way of conversion to God. Through these the mind, which once enjoyed sin, is purified, and the unchaste flesh restrained from evil lusts. The two shoes are two intentions: namely, the will to make amendment for your past sins, and the will to do good and refrain from evil. Your shirt is hope in God; and just as a shirt has two sleeves, so may justice and mercy be paired with your hope, so that you will hope for the mercy of God, yet not forget his justice. Think about his justice and harsh judgment in such a way that you do not forget his mercy, for he does not work justice without mercy, or mercy without justice. The cloak is faith, for just as the cloak covers everything and everything is enclosed in it, man can likewise comprehend and attain all things by faith. This cloak should be decorated with the tokens of your Bridegroom’s love - namely, how he created you, how he redeemed you, how he raised you and led you into his spirit and opened your spiritual eyes. The brooch, which should always be on your chest, is the frequent consideration of his suffering: how he was mocked and scourged, how he stood alive on the cross, bloody and wounded in all his limbs, how in death his whole body shook from the most bitter pain and anguish, and how he commended his spirit into the hands of his Father. May this brooch always be on your chest! There should also be a crown on your head,

which means that you should be chaste in your desires, so much so, that you would rather endure a beating and pain than to be further stained.

Therefore, be modest and polite and do not think about or desire anything but your God and Creator - for when you have him, you have everything! Adorned in this way, you shall await your Bridegroom.”

The words of the Queen of Heaven to her beloved daughter, Saint Bridget, teaching her how she should love and praise the Son of God together with his blessed Mother.

Chapter 8

“I am the Queen of Heaven. You are concerned about how you should praise and honor me. Know and be certain that all praise of my Son also is praise of me, and those who dishonor him also dishonor me. This is so because I loved him and he loved me so ardently that both of us were like one heart. He so magnificently honored me, who was an earthen vessel, that he raised me above all the angels. Therefore, you should praise me like this: “Blessed be you, God, Creator of all things, who deigned to descend into the womb of the Virgin Mary! Blessed be you, God, who wished to be within the Virgin Mary without burdening her, and deigned to take immaculate flesh from her without sin! Blessed be you, God, who came to the Virgin, bringing joy to her soul and her whole body, and who went out of her without sin, to the joy of her whole body! Blessed be you, God, who after your heavenly ascension gladdened the Virgin Mary, your Mother, with continuous comforts and visited her with your consolation! Blessed be you, God, who assumed the body and soul of the Virgin Mary, your Mother, into heaven and honorably placed her above all the angels next to your Divinity! Have mercy on me for the sake of all her prayers!”

The words of the Queen of Heaven to her beloved daughter about the wonderful love the Son had for His Virgin Mother, and about how the Mother of Christ was conceived within the most chaste marriage and sanctified in the womb. She tells how she was assumed, body and soul, into Heaven, and about the power of her name, and about the good and evil angels assigned to men for their protection or trial.

Chapter 9

“I am the Queen of Heaven. Love my Son, for he is most worthy; when you have him, you have all that is worthwhile. He is also most desirable; when you have him, you have all that is desirable. Love him, too, for he is most virtuous; when you have him, you have every virtue. I want to tell you how wonderful his love for my body and soul was and how much he honored my name. My Son loved me before I loved him, since he is my Creator.

He united my father and mother in a marriage so chaste that there could not be found a more chaste marriage at that time. They never wanted to come together except in accordance with the Law, and only then with the intention to bring forth offspring.

When an angel revealed to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, they would rather have died than to come together in carnal love; lust was dead in them. I assure you that when they did come together, it was because of divine love and because of the angel’s message, not out of carnal desire, but against their will and out of a holy love for God. In this way, my flesh was put together by their seed and through divine love. Then, when my body had been made and formed, God infused the created soul into it from his divinity, and the soul was immediately sanctified along with the body, and the angels guarded and served it day and night. When my soul was sanctified and joined to its body, my mother felt such great joy that it would have been impossible to describe it!

Afterwards, when my lifetime had been accomplished, my Son first raised up my soul - for it was the mistress of the body - to a more excellent place than others in heaven, right next to his Divinity. Later, he also raised up my body in such a manner that no other creature's body is so close to God as mine. See how much my Son loved my soul and body! Yet, there are some people with a malevolent spirit who deny that I was assumed into Heaven, body and soul, and also others who simply do not know any better. But this is a most certain truth: I, with body and soul, was assumed to the Divinity!

Hear now how much my Son honored my name! My name is Mary, as it is said in the Gospel. When the angels hear this name, they rejoice in their mind and thank God for the great mercy that he worked through me and with me and because they see my Son's Humanity glorified in his Divinity. Those within the fire of purgatory rejoice exceedingly, just like a sick and bedridden man does if he receives a word of comfort that pleases his soul: he is suddenly overjoyed! When the good angels hear my name, they immediately move closer to the righteous for whom they are guardians, and rejoice over their progress in good deeds and virtues.

All humans have been given both good angels for their protection, and bad angels to test them. The good angels are not separated from God; they serve the soul without leaving God. They are constantly in his sight. Yet they work to inflame and incite the soul to do good. All the demons, however, shudder with fear at the name of Mary! When they hear the name, "Mary", they immediately release a soul out of the claws with which they had held her. Just as a bird or hawk, with its claws and beak embedded into its prey, releases it immediately if it hears a sound, but soon returns when it sees that no action follows, so do the demons - frightened when they hear my name - release the soul. But they return and fly back as fast as an arrow if no improvement follows.

No one is so cold in his love of God (unless he is damned) that he will not experience the devil releasing him from his habitual sins if only he invokes my name with the true intention of never returning to his evil deeds. The devil will never return to him unless he resumes

the will to commit mortal sins. Sometimes, though, the devil is allowed to trouble him for the sake of his greater reward. However, the devil shall never own him.

The words of Virgin Mary to her daughter, presenting a useful lesson about how she should live, and describing many wonderful things about the suffering of Christ.

Chapter 10

“I am the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God. I told you to wear a brooch on your chest. I will now show you more fully how, from the beginning, when I first heard and understood that God existed, I always, and with fear, was concerned about my salvation and my observance of his commandments. But when I learned more about God - that he was my Creator and the judge of all my actions - I loved him more dearly, and I was constantly fearful and watchful so as to not offend him by word or deed.

Later, when I heard that he had given the Law and the commandments to the people and worked such great miracles through them, I made a firm decision in my soul to never love anything but him, and all worldly things became most bitter to me. When still later I heard that God himself would redeem the world and be born of a Virgin, I was seized by such great love for him that I thought of nothing but God and desired nothing but him. I withdrew myself, as much as I was able, from the conversation and presence of parents and friends, and I gave away all my possessions to the poor, and kept nothing for myself but meager food and clothing.

Nothing was pleasing to me but God! I always wished in my heart to live until the time of his birth, and perhaps, deserve to become the unworthy handmaid of the Mother of God. I also promised in my heart to keep my virginity, if this was acceptable to him, and to have no possessions in the world. However, if God wanted otherwise, my will was that his will, not mine, be done; for I believed that he could do all

things and wanted nothing but what was beneficial and best for me. Therefore, I entrusted all my will to him.

When the time approached for the virgins to be presented in the temple of the Lord, I was also among them due to the devout compliance of my parents to the Law. I thought to myself that nothing was impossible for God, and since he knew that I wanted and desired nothing but him, I knew that he could protect my virginity, if it pleased him. However, if not, I wanted his will to be done. After I had heard all the commandments in the temple, I returned home, burning even more now than ever before with the love of God, being inflamed daily with new fires and desires of love.

For this reason, I withdrew myself even more from everyone, and was alone day and night, fearing greatly, and most of all, that my mouth should say anything, or my ears hear anything against the will of my God, or that my eyes see anything alluring or harmful. I was also afraid in the silence, and very worried that I might be silent about things of which I should, instead, have spoken.

While I was worried in my heart like this, alone by myself and placing all my hope in God, an inspiration about God's great power came over me, and I recalled how the angels and everything created serve him, and how his glory is indescribable and unlimited. While I was thus fascinated by this thought, I saw three wonderful things: I saw a star, but not the kind that shines in the sky; I saw a light, but not the kind that shines in this world; I smelled a fragrance, but not of herbs or anything else of this world. It was most delightful and truly indescribable, and it filled me up so completely that I jubilated with joy!

After this, I immediately heard a voice - but not from a human mouth - and when I heard it, I shuddered with the great fear that it might be an illusion, or a mockery by an evil spirit. But shortly after this, an angel of God appeared before me; he was like the most handsome of men, but not in the flesh as is the body of a created man, and he said to me: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!' When I heard this, I wondered what he meant and why he had come to me

with such a greeting, for I knew and believed that I was unworthy of any such thing - or any good thing! However, I also knew that nothing is impossible for God, if he desires it.

Then the angel spoke again: 'The child to be born in you is holy and will be called the Son of God. May his will be done as it pleases him.' But, not even then did I consider myself worthy, and I did not ask the angel why, or when, this would happen. Instead I asked him how it could be that I, an unworthy maiden, who did not know any man, should become the Mother of God. The angel answered me (as I have just said): 'Nothing is impossible for God, for whatever he wants to do will be done.'

When I had heard these words of the angel, I felt the most fervent desire to become the Mother of God, and my soul spoke out of love and desire, saying: 'See, here I am; your will be done in me!' With these words, my Son was conceived in my womb to the indescribable joy of my soul and my every limb! While I had him in my womb, I bore him without any pain, without any heaviness or discomfort. I humbled myself in all things, knowing that he whom I bore was the Almighty!

When I gave birth to him, it was also without any pain or sin, just as I had conceived him, but with such exaltation and joy of soul and body that my feet did not feel the ground where they had been standing because of this indescribable joy! Just as he had entered my limbs to the joy of all my soul, he left my body, leaving my virginity intact, and my soul and whole body in a state of indescribable joy and jubilation.

When I gazed upon and contemplated his beauty, joy seeped through my soul like dewdrops and I knew myself to be unworthy of such a son. But when I considered the places where (as I had learned from the predictions of the prophets) nails would be pierced through his hands and feet at the crucifixion, my eyes filled with tears and my heart was almost torn apart by sorrow.

When my Son saw my weeping eyes, he became almost deathly saddened. However, when I considered his divine power, I was consoled again in knowing that this was what he wanted and that it should happen in this way, and I joined all my will to his. So my joy was always mixed with sorrow.

When the time of my Son's suffering arrived, his enemies seized him and struck him on the cheek and neck, spat at him and ridiculed him. Then he was led to the pillar of torture where he voluntarily removed his clothes and placed his hands around the pillar, and his enemies then mercilessly bound them. When he stood bound at the pillar, he had no covering at all, but stood naked as he had been born, suffering the shame of his nakedness.

Then all my Son's friends fled from him, and his enemies came together from all directions and stood there, scourging his body, which was pure from every stain and sin. I was standing nearby, and at the very first lashing, I fell down as if I were dead. When I regained consciousness, I saw his body whipped and scourged so badly that the ribs were visible! What was even more terrible – when the whip was pulled out, his flesh was furrowed and torn by it, just as the earth is by a plough! As my Son was standing there, all bloody and wounded, so that no place could be found on him that was still intact and no sound spot could be scourged, then someone present there, aroused in spirit, asked: 'Are you going to kill him before he is even judged?' And he cut off his bonds immediately.

Then my Son put his clothes back on, and I saw that the place where he had been standing was filled with blood! By observing my Son's footprints, I could see where he had walked because the ground was bloody there as well. They did not even wait for him to get dressed, but pushed and dragged him to make him hurry up. While my Son was being led away like a robber, he wiped the blood from his eyes. When he had been sentenced to death, they placed the cross on him so that he could carry it to the place of suffering. When he had carried it for a while, a man came along and took the cross to carry it for him. As my Son was going to the place of suffering, some people hit him on the neck, while others hit him in the face. He was so

brutally and forcefully beaten that, although I did not see who hit him, I heard the sound of the blow clearly. When I reached the place of suffering with him, I saw all the instruments of his death lying there ready. When my Son got there, he took off his clothes by himself.

The executioners and the crucifiers said to each other: 'These are our clothes! He will not get them back because he is condemned to death!' As my Son was standing there, naked as he had been born, a man came running up and handed him a cloth with which he joyfully covered his private parts. Then the cruel executioners seized him and stretched him out on the cross. First, they fastened his right hand to the wooden beam (which was fashioned with holes for the nails), piercing the hand at the place where the bone was most solid and firm. Then they pulled out his other hand with a rope and fastened it, in a similar way, to the beam. Next they crucified the right foot - with the left foot on top of it - with two nails, so that all his sinews and veins were stretched so much that they burst. After they had done this, they put the crown of thorns^[1] on his head. It cut into my Son's venerable head so deeply that his eyes were filled with blood as it flowed down, his ears were blocked by it, and his beard was totally soaked with it. As he stood there, so bloody and pierced, he felt sorry for me, for I was standing nearby and crying. Looking with his blood-filled eyes upon my nephew, John, he commended me to his care. At that moment I heard some people saying that my Son was a robber! Others said that he was a liar, and others that no one deserved to die more than did my Son!

My sorrow was renewed from hearing all this. And, as I said before, when the first nail was driven into him, I became overwhelmed by the sound of the first strike and fell down as if dead with darkened eyes, trembling hands, and faltering legs. In my bitter pain and great sorrow, I was not able to look up again until he had been completely nailed to the cross. But when I got up, I saw my Son hanging pitifully, and I, his most sorrowful Mother, was so grieved and heartbroken that I could barely stand up because of my great and bitter sorrow. When my Son saw me and his friends in inconsolable tears, he called out with a loud and sorrowful voice to his Father,

saying: 'Father, why have you forsaken me?' It was as if he wanted to say: 'There is no one who pities me but you, Father.'

By this time, his eyes seemed half-dead. His cheeks were sunken, his face was sorrowful, his mouth open, and his tongue was bloody. His stomach was pressed in towards his back because of all the liquid that had been lost. It was as if he had no intestines. All of his body was pale and languid because of the loss of blood. His hands and feet were very rigidly outstretched, for they had been extended and made to conform to the shape of the cross. His beard and hair were completely soaked with blood. When my Son stood there so bruised and pale blue, only his heart was still vigorous, for it was of the best and strongest nature. He had taken from my flesh the most pure and well-wrought body. His skin was so thin and tender that blood flowed out of it instantly if he was scourged even slightly. His blood was so fresh that it could be seen inside the pure skin. And because he had the very best constitution, life contended with death in his pierced body. Sometimes the pain from his pierced limbs and sinews rose up to his heart, which was still completely vigorous and unhurt and tormented it with the most unendurable pain and suffering. Sometimes the pain descended from his heart into his wounded limbs and, in so doing, prolonged his bitter death.

Surrounded by these pains, my Son beheld his weeping friends who, with his help, would rather have suffered his pain themselves or have burned in hell for all time than to see him tortured in this way. His sorrow over his friends' sorrow exceeded all the bitterness and grief which he had endured in body and heart, for he loved them so tenderly. Then, out of the exceedingly great suffering and anguish of his body, he cried out on account of his Manhood to the Father: 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' When I, his most sorrowful Mother heard his voice, my whole body trembled in the bitter pain of my heart. As often as I later thought on this cry, it was as if still present and fresh in my ears.

When his death drew near, his heart burst because of the violence of the pain. His whole body convulsed, and his head raised itself a little, and then dropped down again. His mouth was open and his

tongue was completely bloody. His hands retracted a little from the place of the nail holes, and his feet were made to bear more of the weight of his body. His fingers and arms were stretched out somewhat, and his back was tightly pressed against the cross.

Then some people said to me: 'Your Son is dead, Mary!' But others said: 'He is dead, but he will rise again.' When everyone was going away, a man came and thrust his spear into his side so forcefully that it almost went out the other side! When the spear was pulled out, its point appeared to be red with blood. It seemed to me then, when I saw my beloved Son's heart pierced, that my own heart had been pierced as well!

Then he was taken down from the cross and I received his body onto my lap. He looked like a leper, and was completely covered with bruises and blood. His eyes were lifeless and filled with blood, his mouth as cold as ice, his beard like string, his face paralyzed, and his hands were so stiffened that they could not be bent over his chest, but only over his stomach, near the navel. I had him on my knee just as he had been on the cross: stiffened in all his limbs.

After this, they laid him in a clean linen cloth and I dried his limbs with my own linen cloth and closed his eyes and mouth, which he had opened when he died. Then they laid him in the grave. I would willingly have been placed alive in the grave with my Son if it had been his will! When these things were done, good John came and brought me home. Behold, my daughter, what my Son has endured for you, and love him with all your heart!

[1] Explanation from Book 7 - Chapter 15: "Then the crown of thorns, which they had removed from his head when he was being crucified, they now put back, fitting it onto his most holy head. It pricked his awesome head with such force that then and there his eyes were filled with flowing blood and his ears were obstructed."

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to His bride about how He willingly delivered himself up to be crucified by His enemies, and about the way to be abstinent in

all members of the body from all illicit movements after His most sweet example of suffering.

Chapter 11

The Son of God spoke to his bride, saying: “I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all the things that are in them, and it is my true body that is consecrated on the altar. Love me with all your heart, for I have loved you, and I delivered myself up to my enemies willingly, while my friends and my Mother remained in the most bitter sorrow and weeping. When I saw the spear, the nails, the whips, and the other instruments of torture there ready, I still went on, no less joyful, to suffer. And when my head was bleeding on all sides from the crown of thorns, and the blood was flowing on all sides, then, even if my enemies had gotten hold of my heart, I would have, still, rather allowed it to be wounded and torn asunder than lose you. For that reason, you are extremely ungrateful, if you do not love me for such a great love.

For if my head was pierced and bent down on the cross for your sake, your head should be bent down toward humility. Since my eyes were filled with blood and tears, your eyes should abstain from pleasurable sights. Since my ears were filled with blood and had to hear blasphemous and scornful words, your ears should be turned away from frivolous and foolish talk. Since my mouth was given the most bitter drink and was denied the good one, you should keep closed your mouth from all evil and open it for good. Since my hands were outstretched and pierced by nails, your deeds, which are symbolized by the hands, should be stretched out to the poor and to my commandments. Your feet, in other words, the desire with which you should walk to me, should be crucified and abstain from all evil lusts. As I have suffered in all my limbs, so may all your limbs be ready for my service. For I demand more service of you than of other people, since I have granted more mercy to you.”

About how an angel prays for the bride of God, and how Christ asks the angel what it is that he prays for the bride and what is good for her.

Chapter 12

The good angel that was the guardian of the bride appeared praying to Christ for her. Our Lord answered the angel and said: "One who wants to pray for another should pray for the other's health and salvation. You are like a fire that is never extinguished, constantly burning with my love. You see and know all things when you see me. You want nothing but what I want. Therefore tell me, what is good for this new bride of mine?" The angel answered: "Lord, you know all things." The Lord said to him: "In truth, all that has been or will be is eternally in me. I know and understand all things in heaven and on earth and there is no change in me. But so that the bride may understand my will, tell me now while she is listening what is good for her." The angel said: "She has a proud and arrogant heart and therefore a cane is needed for her so that she may be tamed." Then our Lord said: "What then do you ask for her, my friend?" The angel said: "My Lord, I beg for your mercy with the rod." Our Lord said: "For your sake, I will do so with her, that I never practice justice without mercy. Therefore, my bride should love me with all her heart and with a good will."

About how the enemy of God has three devils in himself and about the terrifying judgment passed on him by Christ.

Chapter 13

"My enemy has three devils in himself. The first sits in his sexual organ, the second in his heart, the third in his mouth. The first is like a skipper who lets water in through the keel; the water, rises by increasing gradually, and then fills up all of the ship. Then the water floods over and the ship sinks down. This ship is his body that is

harassed by the temptations of devils and by his own lusts as though by tempestuous waves.

First, the evil lust entered into his body through the keel, that is, through the evil desire with which he took delight in bad thoughts. And since he did not resist through repentance and penance and did not repair his body's ship with the nails of abstinence, the water of lust increased daily while he gave his consent to evil. Then the belly of the ship filled with evil desires, and the water flooded over and drowned the ship with lust so that it was unable to reach the haven of salvation.

The second devil sits in his heart and is like a worm lying inside an apple. The worm first eats the core of the apple and then leaves its filth there and crawls around inside the whole apple until it is completely useless. This is what the devil does: First, he destroys the man's will and good desires, which are like the core where all the soul's strength and all goodness reside, and when the heart has been emptied of these goods, the devil then leaves in their place in his heart worldly thoughts and desires that he had loved more. The devil now drives his body to what pleases him, and for this reason, his strength and understanding are diminished and he begins to hate life. This man is indeed an apple without a core, that is to say, a man without a heart, for he enters my church without a heart since he has no love of God.

The third devil is like an archer who looks out through the windows and shoots at the careless. How can the devil not be in him who never speaks without mentioning the devil? That which is loved more is mentioned more often. His bitter words, with which he hurts others, are like arrows shot through as many windows as the number of times the devil is mentioned, and innocent people take offense at his words.

Therefore do I, who am the Truth, swear by my truth that I shall condemn him like a whore to the sulfurous fire, like a deceitful traitor to the mutilation of all his limbs and like a scoffer of the Lord to eternal shame! However, as long as his soul and body are united, my mercy stands ready for him. What I demand of him is that he should attend the divine services and prayers more often, not to fear any

humiliation or desire any honor, and that evil or bad words will never be mentioned by his mouth.

EXPLANATION

This man was an abbot of the Cistercian order. He buried an excommunicated person. When he had read the last funeral prayer over him, Saint Bridget heard in ecstasy of spirit the following words of our Lord: “This man did as he should not have done and buried an excommunicated man. But now you should know and be sure that he is the one that is going to be buried first after the departed. For he sinned against the Father, who told us to never show respect to persons against justice or to honor the rich unjustly. But he honored the unworthy for a small perishable thing and laid him among the worthy, as he should not have done. He also sinned against the Holy Spirit, who is the communion and fellowship of the righteous, when he buried an unrighteous man with the good and righteous. He also sinned against me, the Son, for I have said: “The one who rejects me shall be rejected.” But this man honored and exalted the one whom my church and my Vicar had rejected.” When the abbot heard these words, he was stricken with remorse and repented from his sins and then died on the fourth day.

The words of Christ to his bride about the method and the veneration she should maintain in prayer, and about the three kinds of people who serve God in this world.

Chapter 14

“I am your God who was crucified on the cross; true God and true man in one person who is present everyday in the hands of the priest. When you pray any prayer to me, always end your prayer with the intention that my will always shall be done and not yours. For when you pray for the already condemned, I do not hear you. Sometimes you also pray for some things that are against your own welfare and that is why it is necessary for you to entrust your will to me, for I

know all things and do not provide you with anything but what is beneficial. Many pray without the right intention and that is why they do not deserve to be heard.

There are three kinds of people who serve me in this world: The first are those who believe me to be God, the Creator and giver of all things and mighty ruler over everything. They serve me with the intention of gaining honor and worldly things, but the things of heaven are considered as nothing to them so that they would gladly do without it if they, instead, could gain the perishable and present things. According to their desire, worldly pleasure falls to them in everything and so they lose the eternal things, but I recompense them with worldly benefits for all the good things they have done for my sake right down to the last farthing and the very last moment.

The second are those who believe me to be God almighty and a strict judge, and these serve me because of fear of punishment but not out of love for the heavenly glory. If they were not afraid of suffering, they would not serve me.

The third are those who believe me to be the Creator of all things and true God and who believe me to be just and merciful. These do not serve me because of any fear of punishment but because of divine love and charity. Rather, they would prefer and endure every punishment, if they could bear it, than to even once provoke me to wrath. These truly deserve to be heard in their prayers, for their will is according to my will.

But the ones who belong to the first kind shall never escape from the place of punishment and torment or get to see my face. The ones who belong to the second kind shall not be punished and tormented as much, but will still be unable to see my face, unless he corrects his fear through penitence and amendment.

The words of Christ to his bride wherein he describes himself as a great king, and about the two treasuries symbolizing the love of God and the love of the world, and a teaching about how to proceed and improve in this life.

Chapter 15

“I am like a great and mighty king. Four things belong to a king: First, he must be rich; second, generous; third, wise and fourth, charitable. I am in truth the King of the angels and of all Humanity. I also have those four qualities that I mentioned: First, I am the richest of all, for I give to everyone according to their needs but possess after this donation not less than before. Second, I am the most generous, since I am ready to give to anyone who prays with love for my mercy. Third, I am the wisest of all, since I know what is best for each and everyone. And fourth, I am charitable, since I am more ready to give than anyone is to ask.

I have, as it were, two treasuries. The first treasury stores heavy things as lead, and the house where they are stored is surrounded with sharp and stinging spikes. But to the one who first begins to turn and roll these heavy things, and then learns how to carry them, they seem as light as feathers. And so the things that before looked heavy, become very light, and the things that before were thought to be bitter and stinging, become sweet. The second treasury stores things that seem to be like shining gold with precious stones and delicious drinks. But the gold is really filth and the drinks are poison. There are two ways into these treasuries, even though there used to be only one way.

At the crossroads, that is, at the beginning of these two ways, there stood a man who cried out to three men who were walking on a different way, and he said: ‘Hear, hear my words! But if you do not want to hear with your ears, then at least see with your eyes that what I say is true. But if you do not want hear or see, then at least use your hands to touch and prove that my words are true and not false.’ Then the first of them said: ‘Let us hear and see if his words are true.’ The second man said: ‘All he says is false.’ The third said: ‘I know that everything he says is true, but I do not care about what he says.’

What are these two treasuries if not my love and the love of the world? There are two ways into these two treasuries: privation and a

complete denial of one's own will lead to my love, while the fleshly lust and a man's own will lead to the love of the world. To some people, my love appears to be a heavy burden of lead, for when they should be fasting or keeping vigil in my service or restrain their flesh from sinful desires, they feel as if they are carrying heavy lead. And if they have to hear words or insults, they think it is heavy and hard, or if they must spend time in purity or prayer, it is as if they were sitting between spikes or thorns and they worry every moment.

The one who wants to remain in my love should first begin to lift and turn the burden over, that is, he should attempt to do the good through his good will and constant desire. Then he should gradually lift the burden a little, that is, do the good he can do, thinking thus to himself: 'This I can do well if God gives me his help and grace.' Then he may persevere in the undertaken task and with great joy bear that which before seemed heavy to him so that every trouble in fasts and vigils or any other trouble will seem to be as light as feathers to him.

My friends rest in such a place, which, to the wicked and lazy, seems to be surrounded with things like spikes and thorns, but to my friends it is as the highest peace and soft as roses. The right way into this treasury is to deny and despise your own will, which happens when a man contemplates my suffering and my love, and does not care about his own will or lust but resists it with all his power and might and constantly strives for the things that are higher and better. And although this way is somewhat heavy in the beginning, it pleases so much in the continuation of it that the things that before seemed impossible to bear later become very light, so that he can rightfully say to himself: 'The yoke and work of God is good and sweet.'

The second treasury is the world. In it there are gold, precious stones, and drinks that seem delicious and pleasant-smelling but are bitter as poison when they are tasted. Each and everyone who carries and owns this gold, must - when his body is weakened and his limbs lose their strength, when his marrow is wasted and his body falls dead to the ground - leave the gold and the precious stones behind for they are of no more use to him than filth. And the drinks of the world, that is, her delights, seem delicious, but once in the stomach, they make

the heart heavy and the head weak and ruin the body, and then man dries and withers away like grass, and when the pangs of death approach, all these pleasures become as bitter as poison. The way leading to this treasury is his self-will and lust, whenever a man does not care about resisting his evil desires and does not contemplate on what I have commanded or done, but immediately does whatever comes to mind, whether it may be licit or not.

Three men are walking on this way, and by these I mean all evil and unrighteous men who love the world and all their self-will. I cried out to these three men as I stood at the crossroads or the beginning of the ways, for when I came to the world in human flesh and body, I showed mankind two ways, as it were, namely, the one to follow and the one to avoid, in other words, the way leading to life and the one to death. For before my coming in the flesh, there was only one way, and on it, all men - good and bad - wandered toward hell.

I am the one who cried out, and my cry was this: 'People, hear my words that lead to the way of life, for they are true! Use your senses to understand that what I say is true. If you do not want to hear my words or cannot listen to them, then at least see them, that is, with faith and reason, see that my words are true. For just as something visible can be discerned with the eyes of the flesh, so too can invisible things be discerned and believed by the eyes of faith. There are many simple men in the Church and Christendom who do few good deeds but still are saved through their faith wherein they believe me to be the Creator of all things and the Redeemer of souls. There is no one who cannot understand and believe that I am God, if he considers how the earth bears fruit and how the heavens give rain, how the trees bloom, how each and every animal exists in its own kind, how the stars serve man, and how troubles and sorrows come and often happen against the will of man. From all these things, man can see that he is mortal and that it is God who arranges and directs all these things. For if God did not exist, everything would be disorganized. Thus, all things are of God, and everything is rationally arranged for the use and knowledge of mankind. And there is not the least little thing that is created or exists in the world without reasonable cause.

So, if a man cannot understand or comprehend my virtues and powers as they are because of his weakness, he can still see them with faith and believe. But if you people in the world do not want to use your reason to consider my power, you can still use your hands to touch and sense the deeds that I and my saints have done. They are namely so obvious that no one can doubt them to be the deeds of God. Who raised the dead and gave sight to the blind if not God? Who cast out the evil devils from men if not God? What have I taught if not things beneficial for the prosperity of soul and body and easy to bear?

But what the first man said means that some people say: 'Let us listen and test if what he says is true!' They stand a while in my service, not for the sake of love or charity but as an experiment and to imitate others; and they do not give up their own will but exercise it along with my will. They are in a dangerous position, for they want to serve two masters, even though they can serve neither one well. When they are called, they shall be rewarded by the master that they have loved the most.

What the second man said means that some people say: 'All his words are false and the Scripture is false.' I am God and the Creator of all things and without me nothing has been made. I laid down the New and the Old Laws; they came out of my mouth, and there is no falsehood in them because I am the Truth. Therefore, those who say that I have spoken falsely and that the Holy Scripture is false shall never see my face; for their conscience tells them that I am truly God, since all things happen according to my will and ordination. The sky gives them light, nor can they give any light to themselves. The earth bears fruit, the air makes the earth fertile, all the animals have a specific ordinance, the devils fear and confess me to be God and righteous men suffer incredible things for their love of me. All these things they see, and yet they do not see me. They could also see me and understand my justice, if they considered and thought on how the earth swallowed the ungodly and how the fire consumed the unrighteous. So could they likewise see me in my mercy when the water flowed for the righteous out of the rock or the water of the ocean parted for them, when the fire avoided harming them or when

heaven gave them food like the earth. Because they see all these things and still say I am a liar, they shall never see my face.

What the third man said means that some people say: ‘We know full well that he is the true God, but we do not care about it.’ These people will suffer and be tormented for all eternity, because they despise me, who am their God and Lord. Is it not a great contempt of them to use my good gifts but nonetheless refuse to serve me? For if they had earned these things by their own diligence and not wholly and entirely from me, their contempt would be small.

But I will give my grace to those who begin to turn over my burden, that is, to those who voluntarily and with a passionate desire attempt to do the little good they can. I will work with the people who lift my weights, that is, those who advance in good deeds day by day for the sake of my love, and I will be their strength and enlighten them so that they will want to do more good. But those who sit in the place that seems to sting them, but really is most peaceful, they work patiently day and night without tiring, increasing more and more in the ardent fire for my honor, thinking that what they do for my sake is very little. These are my most dear friends, and they are very few, since the drinks found in the other treasury are more pleasing to the others.

About how the bride perceived a saint speaking to God about a woman who was being horribly tormented by the devil and who was later delivered from him through the prayers of the glorious Virgin Mary.

Chapter 16

The bride saw a saint speaking to God, saying: “Why is the soul of this woman so afflicted by the devil when you have redeemed her by your blood?” The devil replied instantly and said: “Because she is mine by right.” Then our Lord said: “With what right is she yours?” The devil answered: “There are two ways; one leads to the kingdom of Heaven and the other to hell. When she saw these two ways, her

conscience and reason told her that she should choose my way. And since she had a free will for choosing the way that she wanted, it seemed to her more beneficial to turn her will toward committing sin, and so she began to walk on my way.

Thereafter, I deceived her with three sins: namely, gluttony, love of money, and sensuality. Consequently, I now dwell in her belly and in her nature, and I hold her with five hands. With the first hand I hold her eyes, so she will not see spiritual things. With my second hand I hold her hands, so she will not do any good deeds. With the third hand I hold her feet, so she will not walk to that which is good. With the fourth hand I hold her reason and understanding, so she will not be ashamed to sin. And with the fifth hand I hold her heart, so she will not return to the right way through remorse and penance.”

Then the Blessed Virgin Mary said to her dear Son: “My beloved Son, compel him to tell the truth about the things I want to ask him.” The Son said: “You are my Mother, you are the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of mercy, you are the consolation of the souls in purgatory and the joy of those who make their way in the world; you are the Mistress of the angels and the most Holy before God, and you are also in authority over the devil. Therefore, command this devil what you want, and he will answer you.”

Then the Holy Virgin Mary asked the devil, saying: “Tell me, devil, what intention had this woman before she entered the church?” The devil answered her: “She had an intention to abstain from sin.” Then the Virgin Mary said to the devil: “Since the will that she previously had led her to hell, tell me now, where does the will that she presently has lead her - namely, her will to abstain from sin?” The devil answered reluctantly: “This will of abstaining from sin leads her toward Heaven.”

Then the Virgin Mary said: “Because you accepted that it was your just right to lead her away from the way of the Holy Church because of her former will to sin, then it is now right and just that her present will shall lead her back to the Church and to the mercy of God. But now, devil, I will ask you another question. Tell me, what

intention does she have in her present state of conscience?" The devil answered: "She has remorse in her mind for the things she has done, and great sadness, and resolves to never again commit such sins but wants to amend as much as she is able."

Then the Virgin Mary asked the devil: "Tell me, could these three sins, namely, sensuality, gluttony, and greed, exist together in a heart at the same time as the three good deeds of remorse, sorrow, and the resolution to improve oneself?" The devil answered: "No." The Holy Virgin Mary then said: "Therefore, tell me, which of these should flee and vanish from her heart, the three virtues or the three vices and sins; for you are saying that they cannot occupy the same heart or place together." The devil said: "I say that the sins must give way."

Then the Virgin Mary answered: "Therefore, the way to hell is closed to her and the way to the kingdom of Heaven is open." Now the Holy Virgin Mary asked the devil further: "Tell me, if a robber was waiting outside the house of the bride and wanted to rob and rape her, what should the bridegroom do?" The devil answered: "If the bridegroom is good and noble-minded, he should defend her and risk his life for her life." The Virgin Mary then said: "You are the wicked robber, and the soul is my Son's bride, for he redeemed her with his own blood. You violated and seized her by force. But since my Son is the Bridegroom of the soul and Lord over you, then it is right for you to flee from him."

EXPLANATION

This woman was a harlot. She wanted to return to the world because the devil tormented her day and night, so much so that he visibly pressed down her eyes, and in the sight of many, dragged her out of bed. Saint Bridget then said openly in the presence and hearing of many trustworthy men: "Move away, devil, for you have troubled and occupied this creature of God enough!" After she had said this, the woman laid a half hour as if dead with her eyes to the ground, and then she got up and said: "In truth, I saw the devil going out through the window in the most hideous of shapes, and I heard a voice saying to me: 'You are in truth liberated from the devil, woman!'" From that

moment on, this woman was delivered from all impatience and suffering and was no longer tormented by impure thoughts, and then she died a good death.

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ to his bride wherein he compares a sinner to three things: namely, an eagle, a fowler, and a fighting man.

Chapter 17

“I am Jesus Christ who am speaking with you. I was in the womb of the Virgin as true God and true man but was, nonetheless, with the Father and controlled and ruled all things, although I was in the Virgin. This most wretched enemy of mine is like three things: First, he is like an eagle that flies in the air while other birds fly under it. Second, he is like a fowler that gently blows and plays on a pipe plastered with glue, causing the birds to be enchanted by his tunes so that they fly toward the pipe and get stuck in the glue. Third, he is like a fighting man who is first in every battle.

He is like an eagle, because in his pride he cannot tolerate anyone being over him, and he injures everyone he can reach with his claws of malice. Therefore, I will cut off the wings of his violence and pride. I will remove his malice from the earth and give him over to the unquenchable boiling kettle, which is the suffering of hell, where he will be tormented without end, if he does not better himself.

He is also like a fowler because he attracts everyone to himself with sweet words and promises, so that anyone who comes to him gets caught in damnation and perdition and can never escape from it. Therefore, the birds of hell shall destroy his eyes so that he will never see my glory but only the eternal darkness of hell. They shall cut off his ears so that he will not hear the words of my mouth. They shall inflict him with pain and bitterness from the feet to the head so that he will endure as many torments as the number of men he led to damnation.

He is also like a fighting man who is first in all evil, not willing to give way to anybody but determined to press everyone down. Therefore, he shall be first in every torment; his suffering shall always be renewed and his lament will never end. However, my mercy stands ready for him as long as his soul is with the body.

EXPLANATION

This man was a very powerful knight who hated the church and the priesthood greatly and inflicted it with insulting words. The previous revelation is about him as well as the following. The Son of God says: “O worldly knight, ask the wise about what happened to prideful Haman who despised my people. Did he not die shamefully and with great disgrace? Likewise does this man scoff at me and my friends. Just as the people of Israel did not mourn Haman’s death, so will my friends not mourn this man’s death, but he will die a most bitter death if he does not better himself.” This is what happened to him.

The words of Christ to his bride about how there should be humility in the house of God, and about how such a house signifies purity of life, and about how buildings and alms should be donated only from goods that are righteously acquired, and about how to restore wrongly acquired goods.

Chapter 18

“In my house should all humility be, which now is completely rejected. There should be a strong wall between the men and the women, because even though I am able to defend everyone and hold them all without a wall, still, for the sake of precaution and because of the devil’s cunning, I want that a wall should separate the two dwelling-houses. It should be strong, and not very high but moderate. The windows should be very simple and clear, and the roof moderately high, so that nothing can be seen there that does not belong to humility. For those who now build houses for me are like master builders, who, when the lord or the master of the house enters

into them, grab him by the hair and trample him under their feet; they raise the filth up high and trample the gold underfoot. This is what many do to me now.

They build up the filth, that is, they build up perishable and worldly things to the sky, but the souls that are more precious than all gold, they could not care any less about. If I want to go in to them through my preachers or through good thoughts, they grab me by the hair and trample me under their feet, that is, they insult me and consider my deeds and my words to be as despicable as filth. They consider themselves to be much wiser. But if they wanted to build up things for me and for my honor, they should first build up the souls to the kingdom of Heaven.

The one who wants to build my house should, with the utmost precision, take care about not letting a penny that has not been properly and justly acquired, go to the building. There are indeed many who know full well that they have wrongly acquired goods and yet are not sorry for it nor have the will of making restitution or giving it back to the people they have cheated and plundered, although they could give it back and make restitution for the injustice if they wanted. But since they know and think to themselves that they cannot keep these things forever, they give a part of their wrongly acquired goods to the churches or monasteries, as if they wanted to appease me by their gift. But the other goods that are properly acquired, they keep for their descendants. In truth, this does not please me.

The one who wants to please me with his gifts should first have the will to better and correct himself and then do the good deeds he is able to do. He should also cry and mourn over the evil things and deeds he has done and then make restitution if he can; and if he cannot, he should have the will of making restitution for the deceitfully acquired goods. Thereafter, he should take great care to never again commit such things. But if it is not possible to find anyone to give back the unlawfully acquired goods to, then he could give it to me, for I am able to pay back everyone what is theirs. If he cannot give it back but has the intention of humbling and improving himself before me with a broken heart, then I am rich enough to give it back

and I can restore the property of all those who have been cheated, either now in this world or in the next to come.

I want to explain to you the meaning of the house that I want to build. This house is the life of purity, and I myself, who created all things and through whom all has been made and exists, am its foundation. There are four walls in this house. The first is my justice, by which I will judge those who are adversarial to this house. The second wall is the wisdom by which I will enlighten the builders of this house with my knowledge and understanding. The third wall is my power, by which I will strengthen them against the temptations of the devil. The fourth wall is my mercy, which receives everyone who prays for it. In this wall is the door of grace through which all, who pray for it, are accepted in. The roof of this house is the love with which I cover the sins of those who love me so that they will not be judged for their sins. The window of the roof, whereby the sun enters, is the thought and consideration of my mercy, and through it the warmth of my Divinity is let in to the builders of the house. But that the wall should be strong and big means that no one is able to undermine my words or overthrow them. That the wall should be moderately high means that my wisdom can be understood and perceived in part, but never fully. The simple but clear windows mean that my words are simple, yet through them the light of divine knowledge is let into the world. The moderately high roof means that my words shall be revealed, not in an incomprehensible way, but in an understandable way that one may easily perceive and comprehend.

The words of our God and Creator to his bride about the splendor of his power, wisdom, and virtue, and about how those who are now called powerful and wise, sin the most against him.

Chapter 19

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I have three qualities: I am most mighty, most wise, and most virtuous. I am namely so mighty that all the angels in Heaven honor me, the demons

in hell dare not look upon me, and all the elements obey my command. I am also so wise that no one can fathom or understand my wisdom, and I have so great insight that I know all that has been and will come to be. I am thereto so rational that not the least little worm or any other animal, no matter how ugly it may seem, has been made without a cause. I am also so virtuous that all good flows from me as from a good spring, and all sweetness emanates from me as from a good wine. Therefore, no one can be mighty, wise, or virtuous without me.

And therefore do the mighty men of the world sin against me very much, for I gave them strength and power so they could honor and glorify me; but they awarded the honor to themselves, as if they had it from themselves. These miserable wretches do not realize their own powerlessness: for if I were to send them the least sickness, they would immediately wither away and everything would become worthless to them. How then could they be able to withstand my strength and power or the eternal torments? But even more do those, who are now said to be wiser than others, sin against me. For I gave them mental powers, understanding, and wisdom so they would love me, but they do not want to understand anything other than that which is to their own temporal benefit and greed. They have their eyes in the back of their head and look only to their own lusts and pleasures, and they are so blind in serving me that they do not give thanks to me, who gave them everything. For no one, neither good nor bad, could feel and understand anything without me, although I allow the wicked to turn their will to their desires. Moreover, no one can be virtuous without me.

Therefore, I could now use the words of the proverb that everyone commonly cites: 'The patient man is despised by everyone.' So am I now considered by mankind to be utterly foolish for my patience, and that is why I am despised by everyone. But woe to them, when my time of patience is over and they will come to know my judgment! They will then be like mud before me that falls down to the deepest depths and does not stop until it comes down to the lowest part of hell.

The Virgin Mother's and the Son's pleasant dialogue with each other and with the bride, and about how the bride should prepare herself for the wedding.

Chapter 20

The Mother of God, the Virgin Mary appeared saying to her Son: “O my Son, you are the King of glory. You are Lord over all lords. You created heaven and earth and all the things in them. Therefore, may your every desire be done, may all your will be done!”

The Son answered: “It is an ancient proverb that says that what a youth learns in his youth, he preserves in his old age. So have also you, my dear Mother, from your youth learned to follow my will and to surrender all your will for my sake. Therefore you did well to say: ‘May your will be done.’ You are like precious gold that is laid on a hard anvil and hammered, for you were hammered with every kind of tribulation, and through my suffering you endured more pain than anyone before. For when my heart burst from the violent pain and bitterness on the cross, your heart was also wounded as if by the sharpest steel, and you would have willingly let it be cut into pieces, had that been my will. But even if you had been able to stop my suffering and wished for my life, still you did not want to if it was not my will. Therefore you did well to say: ‘Your will be done.’”

Thereafter, the Virgin Mary said to the bride of God: “My Son’s bride, love my Son, for he loves you, and honor his saints who stand in his presence, for they are like countless stars whose light and brilliance cannot be compared to any worldly light. Just like the light of the world differs from darkness, yet even more does the light of the saints differ from the light of this world. In truth, I tell you that if the saints were seen in their brightness as they really are, no human eye could set eyes on them or endure it without losing their sight and life.”

Thereafter, the Son of God spoke to his bride and said: “My bride, you should have four qualities: First, you should be ready for the wedding of my Divinity wherein no fleshly lusts are found, but only the most sweet spiritual desire, the one that is becoming for God to

have with a chaste soul. The love for your children, your friends, or your temporal belongings should not draw you away from my love. May it not happen to you what happened to those foolish virgins who were not ready when the Lord wanted to call them to the wedding and were therefore excluded.

Second, you should believe my words, for I am the Truth, and from my mouth has never anything come but truth, and nobody can find anything other than truth in my words. Sometimes I have a spiritual meaning with what I am saying, and sometimes I expressly mean what the words say, and my words should then be understood as they are, without any interpretation. Therefore, no one can justly accuse me of lying.

Third, you should be obedient in order for you to do righteous penance and reparation in all the limbs with which you sinned; for even though I am merciful, I do not forego justice. Therefore, obey with humility and gladness those whom you are charged to obey, so that you do not do even the things which seem beneficial and reasonable to you if it goes against obedience. For it is better to surrender your own will for the sake of obedience, even if it is good, and to follow the will of your superior, as long as it does not go against the salvation of the soul or is unreasonable in any other way.

Fourth, you should be humble, for you are united in a spiritual marriage. Thus, you should be humble and modest at the arrival of your bridegroom. Your handmaid should be sober and restrained, which means that your body should be abstinent from all superfluous things and well disciplined. For you will become fruitful with spiritual offspring for the benefit and good of many, just as a shoot is grafted onto a dry stem and makes the stem begin to blossom; so through my grace you shall bear fruit and blossom. My grace will gladden and intoxicate you, and the whole host of Heaven will rejoice because of the sweet wine I will give you. You must not lack trust in my goodness.

I assure you that just as Zechariah and Elizabeth rejoiced in their souls with an unspeakable joy over the promise of a future child, you

too, shall rejoice over my grace that I want to give you, and thereto, others will rejoice through you. With these two, Zechariah and Elizabeth, an angel spoke; but I, the God and Creator of the angels, want to speak to you. These two, Zechariah and Elizabeth, gave birth to my most dear friend John, but I want many sons to be born to me through you, not of the flesh but of the spirit. In truth, I tell you, John was like a tube or flower full of sweetness and honey, for never did anything unclean or superfluous enter his mouth, and he never received the necessities of life over the limits of what he needed. And semen never went out of his body and that is why he can rightly be called an angel and a virgin for the divine life that he lived.”

The Bridegroom's words to his bride found in the most delightful parable about a sorcerer by which the devil is ingeniously signified and described.

Chapter 21

The Bridegroom of the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus, spoke to his bride in a parable presenting the example of a frog and said: “Once there was a sorcerer who had the most shining gold. A simple and mild man came to him and wanted to buy this gold from him. The sorcerer said to the simple man: ‘You will not receive this gold, unless you give me better gold and in larger quantity.’ The man said: ‘I have such a great desire for your gold that I will give you what you want rather than losing it.’ He then gave the sorcerer better gold and in larger quantity and received the shining gold from him and put it in a casket, thinking of making himself a ring from it for his finger.

After a short time, the sorcerer approached that simple man and said: ‘The gold you bought from me and laid in your casket is not gold, as you thought, but the most ugly frog. It has been fostered in my chest and fed with my food. And in order for you to test and know that this is true, you may open the casket and you will see how the frog will jump to my chest where it was fostered.’ When the man wanted to open it and find out if it was true, the frog appeared in the casket. The cover of the casket was hanging on four hinges that were

about to break and fall off soon. Immediately when the cover of the casket was opened, the frog saw the sorcerer and jumped into his chest.

When the servants and friends of the simple man saw this, they said to him: 'Lord, this most fine gold is in the frog, and if you want, you can easily get the gold.' The man said: 'How can I get it?' They replied: 'If someone took a sharp and heated spear and thrust it into the hollow part of the frog's back, he would quickly get the gold out. But if he cannot find any hollow in the frog, he should then, with the greatest force and effort, thrust his spear into it, and this is how you will get back the gold you bought.'

Who is this sorcerer if not the devil, inciting and counseling mankind to fleshly lusts and honor, which are nothing else but vanity and destruction? He promises that what is false is true and makes what is true seem to be false. He possesses this most precious gold, namely, the soul, who I, through my divine power, created more precious than all the stars and planets. I created it immortal and imperishable and more pleasing to me than everything else and I prepared for her an eternal resting place with me. I bought her from the violence of the devil with better and more valuable gold when I gave my own flesh for her, spotless from every sin, and suffered such a bitter torment that none of my limbs were without wounds or pain. I placed the redeemed soul in the body as in a casket, until the time when I would place her in the presence of my divine honor and glory in the kingdom of Heaven. But now, the redeemed soul of man has become like the most ugly and shameless frog, jumping in its arrogance and living in filth through its sensuality. She has taken my gold away from me, that is, all my justice.

That is why the devil rightly can say to me: 'The gold you bought is not gold but a frog, fostered in the chest of my lust. Separate therefore the body from the soul and you shall see that she will jump directly to the chest of my lust where it was fostered.' My answer is this: 'Since the frog is hideous to look at, frightful to hear, and poisonous to touch, and does not bring me any good nor any pleasure or comfort but only does so for you, in whose chest she was fostered,

you can have it, since she is yours by right. And when the door is opened, that is, when the soul is separated from the body, she will fly directly to you to remain with you for all eternity.'

Such is the soul of the man I am talking about to you. She is namely like the most vile frog, full of filthiness and lust, fostered in the chest of the devil. To the casket, that is, to his body, I am now coming closer through his coming death. The casket is hanging by four hinges that are about to fall off, for his body is supported by four things: namely, strength, beauty, wisdom, and sight, which are all now beginning to perish and fade for him. When his soul begins to separate from the body, she flies straightaway to the devil on whose milk it was fostered, that is, his lust, since she has forgotten my love with which I took upon myself the suffering and pain she deserved. She does not repay my love with love, and deprives me of my rightful possession, because she should love me more than anyone else since I redeemed her. But she finds a greater pleasure in the devil. The voice of her prayer is like the voice of the frog, and her appearance is abominable and hideous in my sight. Her ears will never hear my joy, and her poisoned senses will never feel my Divinity.

But, I am still merciful, and if anyone were to touch his soul, even though she is unclean, and examine her to see if there is any remorse or good will in it, and thrust a sharp and burning spear into his mind, which means the fear of my severe judgment, then he could still find my mercy, if he only would obey me. And if there is no remorse and love in him, still there is hope, if someone were to pierce him with a sharp and bitter correction and rebuked him strictly. For as long as the soul lives with the body, my mercy is open and ready for everyone.

Consider therefore how I died because of my love, and yet nobody repays me with love, but they even take from me what is mine by right; for it would be true justice if men improved their lives in proportion to the pain and suffering of their redemption. But now they want to live all the worse in proportion to the bitter pain and death I suffered when redeeming them; and the more I show them the hatefulness and ugliness of sin, the more boldly they want to sin. Behold, therefore, and consider that I do not get angry without cause,

for they have changed my mercy into wrath. I redeemed them from sin, and they entangle themselves even more in sin.

But you, my bride, give me what you are obliged to give me, that is, may you keep your soul pure for me, because I died for you in order that you might keep her pure for me.”

The Mother’s most lovely question to the bride, the humble answer of the bride to the Mother, and the Mother’s useful answer to the bride, and about the improvement of good people among the evil.

Chapter 22

The Mother of God spoke to her Son’s bride, saying: “You are my Son’s bride. Tell me what is on your mind and what you are praying for.” The bride answered: “My Lady, you know it very well, for you know all things.” Then the Holy Virgin said: “Even though I know all things, I would still like to hear you tell me while those standing here present are listening.” The bride said: “My Lady, I fear two things: First, for my sins, for which I do not cry and make amends for as I would like. Second, I am sad because your Son’s enemies are so many.”

Then the Virgin Mary answered: “In regard to the first one, I give you three cures: First, think about how all things that have spirit, such as frogs and other animals, have troubles sometimes, and yet their spirits do not live eternally but die with the body. But your soul and every human soul does live forever. Second, think about the mercy of God, because there is no man who is so sinful that his sin is not immediately forgiven, if he only prays for God’s forgiveness with an intention to better himself and with true repentance for his former sins. Third, think and visualize about how great the glory of the soul is when she lives forever with God and in God.

And regarding the second, namely, that the enemies of God are so many, I give you three cures also: First, consider that your God and

your Creator and theirs is judge over them, and they will never judge him again, even though he patiently bears their malice for a time. Second, consider that they are the sons of damnation and how heavy and intolerable it will be for them to burn for all eternity in hell. They are like the most wicked servants who will lose the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven, while the sons will partake of the inheritance. But now maybe you will say: 'Should not one preach to them?' Yes, of course one should preach to them! Consider how good people are often found among the evil, and that the sons of evil sometimes turn away from the good, just like the prodigal son who demanded his inheritance from his father and went away to a faraway kingdom and lived an evil life. But sometimes they are seized by remorse through the preaching and return to the Father, and they are more welcome to him than as if they had never been sinful before. Therefore, one should preach especially to them, because, even though the preacher almost only sees evil people, he, nonetheless, thinks to himself: 'Perhaps there are some among them who will become the sons of my Lord; I will therefore preach to them.' This kind of preacher will receive the greatest reward. Third, consider that the wicked are allowed to live as a trial for the good, so that, if they are sorrowful for the behavior of the wicked, they might be rewarded with the fruit of patience, as you will understand better by the following parable.

The rose smells sweet, is beautiful to look upon, is soft to the touch, and yet it only grows among thorns that are sharp to the touch, hideous to look upon, and do not have a pleasant scent. Similarly, good and righteous men, even though they are soft in their patience, beautiful in their virtues, and sweet smelling in their good example, still cannot become perfected or be put to the test except among the evil. Sometimes the thorn also protects the rose so that it will not be picked before it has bloomed; likewise, the evil give the good an occasion and a reason not to fall into sin, and sometimes the good are restrained by their malice so that they do not fall into immoderate cheerfulness or lust or any other sin. A wine will never become good unless it is stored in the dreg, and neither can the good and righteous remain and improve in virtues if they are not tested through afflictions and persecutions by the unrighteous. So tolerate willingly the enemies of my Son, and remember that he is their judge, and that he, if justice

demanded to destroy them all, could easily exterminate them in a moment. Therefore, may you tolerate them as long as he tolerates them.”

The words of Christ to his bride about a false man, who is called an enemy of God, and about his hypocrisy and all his characteristics.

Chapter 23

“This man appears to the people to be a well-dressed, strong, and attractive man, who is brave in his Lord’s battle, but when his helmet is removed from his head, he is ugly and disgusting to look at and is useless for work. His brain is seen to be bare. His ears are on his forehead and his eyes are in his neck. His nose is dissevered and his cheeks are altogether sunken like those of a dead man. On the right side, his chin and half of his lips have all fallen off, so that nothing is left on the right side except his throat which is seen to be all uncovered. His chest is full of swarming worms and his arms are like two snakes. The most poisonous scorpion lives in his heart. His back is like burnt coal. His intestines are stinking and rotting like pus-filled, unclean flesh. His feet are dead and useless to walk with.

I will tell you what all this signifies. On the outside he appears to people to be decorated with good habits, wisdom and bravery in the service and honor of me, but he is by no means like that. For if the helmet were removed from his head, that is, if it were shown to people how he really is spiritually in his soul, he would be uglier than all men. His brain is bare because his foolish customs and frivolity clearly demonstrate to good men that he is unworthy of such an honor. For if my wisdom pleased him, he would understand how much his honor is greater than others, thereby clothing himself in the most rigorous of conduct and divine virtues as compared to others.

The ears are on his forehead because, instead of having the humility due to his high dignity in being a light for others to teach them good things, he only wants to hear about his own praise and

glory, thereby becoming so prideful that he only wants to be called great and good by everyone. He has eyes in his neck, because all his thoughts are turned to the present instead of the eternal. He thinks about how to please men and about the requirements for the needs of the flesh, but not about how he may please me and benefit souls. His nose is dissevered, since he has lost all rational discretion whereby he might see and distinguish between sin and virtue, between worldly honor and eternal honor, between worldly and eternal riches, between the short pleasures of the world and the eternal pleasures.

His cheeks are sunken, that is, all the veneration he should have for me, with the beauty of the virtues whereby he might please me, are entirely dead in the service of me: for he is ashamed to sin in front of men but not in front of me. One part of his cheekbone and lips has fallen off so that nothing remains except for his throat, for the imitation of my works and the preaching of my words, in addition to a divine and fervent prayer, have totally fallen off from him so that nothing remains in him except his gluttonous throat. But to imitate the wicked and to be involved in worldly affairs seems altogether healthy and beautiful to him.

His chest is full of worms, because in his chest, where the remembrance of my suffering and the thought and consideration of my deeds and commandments should be, there is only a care for the things of the world with the desire and greed of the world, which are like worms devouring his conscience so that he does not think of spiritual or divine things. In his heart, where I would wish to dwell and my love should be, there now sits the most evil scorpion with a stinging tail and an enticing face and tongue; because pleasing and reasonable words proceed from his mouth, but his heart is full of injustice and deceit, because he does not care if the church he is supervising gets destroyed, as long as he can fulfill his own will.

His arms are like two snakes, because in his malice he reaches out his arms to the simple-minded and calls them to himself with simplicity, but, when he gets a suitable opportunity, he causes them to fall pitifully. Like a snake, he coils himself into a ring, because he hides his malice and unrighteousness, so that barely anyone can

understand his treacherous plans. He is like the most vile snake in my sight, for just as the snake is more detestable than any other animal, so is he more ugly in my sight than any other man, since he counts my justice as nothing and holds me to be as a man who is unwilling to judge righteously.

His back is like coal, but it should be like ivory since his deeds should be more mighty and pure than others in order to be able to better carry the weak through his patience and his example of a good life. But now he is like coal, because he is too impatient to endure a single word for my honor, unless he benefits from it. Yet he seems to be mighty to the world. Therefore, when he thinks he stands, he will fall, since he is as hideous and lifeless as coal before me and my saints.

His intestines stink, because his thoughts and desires smell like rotting flesh before me with a stench that no one can tolerate. Neither can any of my saints tolerate him, but everyone turns his face away from him and demands a judgment over him. His feet are dead. His two feet are his two dispositions towards me, that is, his will to make amends for the sins he has done and his will to do good deeds. But these feet are altogether dead in him, because all the marrow of love is consumed in him and nothing is left in him except the hardened bones. And in this way he stands before me. However, as long as the soul is with the body, he can find my mercy.

EXPLANATION

Saint Lawrence appeared and said: “When I was in the world, I had three things: self-purity, mercy to my neighbor, and love of God. Therefore I preached the word of God fervently, distributed the goods of the Church wisely, and suffered the scourging, fire, and death gladly. But this bishop tolerates and pretends not to notice the incontinence of the clergy, and he liberally distributes the goods of the Church to the rich and shows love only toward himself and his own friends. Therefore, I declare to him that the lightest cloud now has ascended into heaven, but dark smoke of fire overshadows it so that it cannot be seen by many. This cloud is the prayer of the Mother of God

for the Holy Church. The fire of greed, ungodliness, and unrighteousness darken it so much that the mercy of the Mother of God cannot easily enter the hearts of the wretched. Therefore, let the bishop quickly turn to the divine love by correcting himself and his subordinates, admonishing them with his good example and word, and leading them to a better life. Otherwise, he will feel the hand of the judge which is his vengeance and justice, and his church will be purged by fire and the sword and afflicted by plundering and tribulation so that it will be a long time before anyone consoles her.”

God the Father’s words before the host of the kingdom of Heaven, and the answer of the Son and Mother to the Father asking for mercy for the daughter, that is, the Church.

Chapter 24

God the Father spoke while the whole host of heaven was listening, and said: “Before you all, I complain over giving my daughter to a man who tortures her greatly and without measure, crushing her feet in the stocks so severely that all the marrow has gone out of her feet.” The Son answered him: “Father, she is the one I redeemed with my blood and espoused to myself, but now she has been brutally violated.” Then the Mother of God spoke and said: “You are my God and my Lord, and your blessed Son’s limbs were enclosed within my body, who is your true Son and my true Son. I refused you nothing on earth. Have mercy on your daughter for the sake of my prayers.”

Thereafter the angels spoke, saying: “You are our Lord and Creator; in you we possess every good thing, and we need nothing but you. We all rejoiced when your bride went forth from you, but now we are rightly sad, because she has been given into the hands of the worst man who insults her with all kinds of mocking and abuse. Have mercy on her for the sake of your great mercy, for her misery is very great, and there is no one to console and save her but you Lord, God Almighty.”

Then God the Father answered the Son, saying: “O my Son, your grievance is my grievance, your word my word, your deeds my deeds. You are in me and I am in you inseparably. Your will be done!” Then he said to the Mother of the Son: “Since you did not refuse me anything on earth, I will not refuse you anything in heaven, and your will shall be fulfilled.” Then he said to the angels: “You are my friends, and the flame of your love burns in my heart. Therefore, I shall have mercy on my daughter for the sake of your prayers.”

The words of the Creator to his bride about how His justice endures evil men for a threefold reason, and how His mercy spares the evil for a threefold reason.

Chapter 25

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. You wondered, my bride, why I am so patient with the evil. That is because I am merciful: for my justice endures and spares them for a threefold reason and my mercy spares them for a threefold reason. First, my justice endures them so that their time may be fully completed. For just as a righteous king might be asked, if he holds someone imprisoned, why he does not put them to death, and he answers: ‘Because it is not yet time for the inquisition of the court where they may be heard so that those who hear it can take greater warning.’ In this way do I tolerate the evil until the time comes for their malice to be made known to others as well. Did I not foretell the rejection of Saul and that he would be expelled from his kingdom and dethroned long before it was made known to men? And I tolerated him for a long time so that his malice would be shown and proven to others. Second, because of the few good deeds that the evil do for which they should be rewarded even down to the last farthing, there shall not be the least little good they have done for me that will go unrewarded; herein they will receive their wage for the good they have done. Third, in order to reveal God’s glory and patience. It was for this reason that I tolerated Pilate, Herod, and Judas, even though they were evil and damned. And if anyone

questions why I tolerate this or that person, let him regard Judas and Pilate.

My mercy also spares the evil for a threefold reason: First, because of my great love, for their eternal torment will be long. For that reason, because of my great love, I tolerate them until the last moment so that their torment will be delayed by the long extension of time here in the world. Second, so that their nature will be consumed by the sins, because the human nature gets consumed by sin so that they would experience the bodily death more bitterly if their nature was healthier and stronger. For a healthy nature dies a more prolonged and bitter death. Third, for the improvement and strength of good people and the conversion of some of the evil. For when good and righteous people are tormented by the evil, it benefits the good and righteous since it helps them to abstain from sin or to gain greater merit.

Likewise, the evil sometimes live for the good of other evil persons. For when the evil reflect on the fall, wickedness, and heinous deeds of some people, they think to themselves and say: ‘What good does it do us to follow them or to live like them? While our Lord is so patient, it is better for us to repent.’ And in this way they sometimes return to me, because they fear to do the things those evil men did, and their conscience tells them they should not do these things. Therefore, it is said, that if someone has been stung by a scorpion, he can be cured by being anointed with the oil wherein another reptile has died. In the same way, sometimes an evil man, who sees another person who is also evil fall and beholds his unrighteousness and vanity, is struck by remorse for his sins and is cured by the mercy and grace of God.

The angelic host's words of praise to God, and about how children would have been born if the first parents had not sinned, and about how God showed miracles to the people through Moses and also later through himself to us on his own coming; and about the breakdown of the bodily marriage in this time, and the conditions of a spiritual marriage.

Chapter 26

The angelic host was seen standing before God, and the entire host said: “Praised and honored be you, Lord God, who are and were without end! We are your servants and we praise and honor you for a threefold reason: First, because you created us to rejoice with you and gave us an indescribable light in which to rejoice forever. Second, because all things are created and maintained by your goodness and constancy, and all things stand according to your will and remain through your word. Third, because you created mankind and took Manhood for their sake! We rejoice greatly for this Manhood, and also for your most chaste Mother who was worthy to bear you whom the heavens cannot comprehend and enclose. Therefore, your honor and blessing are above all things for the dignity of the angels that you have exalted greatly in honor. May your everlasting eternity and constancy be over all things that are and can be constant! May your love be over mankind whom you created! O Lord God, you alone should be feared for your great power, you alone should be desired for your great love, you alone should be loved for your constancy. May all praise and honor be to you forever without end. Amen!”

Then our Lord answered: “You honor me worthily for every created creature. But, tell me, why do you praise me for mankind which has provoked me to wrath more than any other creature? I created him more superior and dignified than all the lower creatures under the sky, and for none else did I suffer such indignities as for mankind and none was redeemed at so great a cost. Or what creature does not abide by its created order other than man? He inflicts me more with sorrow than any other creature. For just as I created you to praise and honor me, so I made man to honor me. I gave him a body like a spiritual temple, and I made and placed the soul in it like a beautiful angel, for the human soul has power and strength like an angel. In this temple, I, the God and Creator of mankind, wished to be like the third so that he would enjoy me and find delight in me. Then I made him another temple, similar to himself, out of his rib.

But now, my bride, for whose sake all these things are being said and shown, you might ask, how children would have been born by them if they had not sinned? I shall answer you: In truth, by the love of God and the mutual devotion and union of the flesh wherein they both would have been set on fire internally, love's blood would have sown its seed in the woman's body without any shameful lust, and so the woman would have become fertile. Once the child was conceived without sin and lustful desire, I would have sent a soul into the child from my divinity, and the woman would have carried the child and given birth to it without pain. When the child was born, it would have been perfect like Adam when he was first created. But this honor was despised by man when he obeyed the devil and coveted a greater honor than I had given to him. After the disobedience was enacted, my angel came over them and they were ashamed over their nakedness, and they immediately experienced the lust and desire of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. Then they also lost me, for when they had me, they did not feel any hunger or sinful fleshly lust or shame, but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight.

But when the devil rejoiced over their perdition and fall, I was moved with compassion for them and did not abandon them but showed them a threefold mercy: I clothed them when they were naked and gave them bread from the earth. And for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their disobedience, I gave and created souls in their seed through my Divinity. And all the evil the devil tempted them with, I turned to good for them entirely.

Thereafter, I showed them how to live and worship me, and I gave them permission to have relations, because before my permission and the enunciation of my will they were stricken with fear and were afraid to unite and have relations. Likewise, when Abel was killed and they were in mourning for a long time and observing abstinence, I was moved with compassion and comforted them. And when they understood my will, they began again to have relations and to procreate children, from which family I, their Creator, promised to be born. When the wickedness of the children of Adam grew, I showed my justice to the sinful, but mercy to my elect; of these I was

appeased so that I kept them from destruction and raised them up, because they kept my commandments and believed in my promises.

When the time of mercy came, I showed my mighty miracles and works through Moses and saved my people according to my promise. I fed them with angel manna and went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire. I gave them my Law and revealed to them my secrets and the future through my prophets. Thereafter, I, the Creator of all things, chose for myself a virgin born of a father and mother; and from her did I take human nature and condescended to be born of her without sin. Just like the first children would have been born in paradise through the divine love of their father's and mother's mutual love and affection without any shameful lust, so my Divinity took Manhood from a virgin without any shameful lust and without hindering or damaging her virginity.

I came in the flesh as true God and man and fulfilled the Old Law and all the scriptures just as it earlier had been prophesied about me, and I initiated the New Law, for the Old Law was narrow and hard to bear and was nothing but a figure of future things to come. For in the Old Law it had been allowed for a man to have several wives, so that the people would not be left without any offspring or would have to intermarry with the gentiles. But in my New Law it is permitted for one man to have one wife, and it is forbidden for him during her lifetime to have several wives. Those who unite with divine love and fear for the sake of procreation and to raise children for the honor of God are my spiritual temple where I wish to dwell as the third with them.

But people in this age are joined in marriage for seven reasons: First, because of facial beauty. Second, because of wealth. Third, because of the despicable pleasure and indecent joy they get out of their impure intercourse. Fourth, because of feasts with friends and uncontrolled gluttony. Fifth, because of vanity in clothing and eating, in joking and entertainment and games and other vanities. Sixth, for the sake of procreating children but not to raise them for the honor of God or good works but for worldly riches and honor. Seventh, they

come together for the sake of lust and they are like brute beasts in their lustful desires.[1]

They come to the doors of my church with one mind and consent, but all their desires and inner thoughts are completely against me. They prefer their own will, which aims at pleasing the world, instead of my will. If all their thoughts and wishes were directed toward me, and if they entrusted their will into my hands and entered into wedlock in fear of me, then I would give them my consent and be as the third with them. But now is my consent, which should be their most precious thing, gone from them, because they have lust in their heart and not my love. Thereafter, they go up to my altar where they hear that they should be one heart and one soul, but then my heart flees from them because they have not the warmth of my heart and know not the taste of my body.

They seek the warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love the flesh that will be eaten by worms. Therefore do such people join in marriage without the bond and union of God the Father and without the Son's love and without the Holy Spirit's consolation. When the couple comes to the bed, my Spirit leaves them immediately and the spirit of impurity approaches instead because they only come together for the sake of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else with each other. But my mercy is still with them if they will be converted to me. Because of my great love, I place a living soul created by my power into their seed. Sometimes I let evil parents give birth to good children, but more often, evil children are born of evil parents, since these children imitate the evil and unrighteous deeds of their parents as much as they are able and would imitate it even more if my patience allowed them. Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent. For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.

For that reason, I wish to turn to the spiritual marriage, the kind that is appropriate for God to have with a chaste soul and chaste body. There are seven good things in it opposed to the evils mentioned above: First, there is no desire for beauty of form or bodily beauty or lustful sights, but only for the sight and love of God. Second, there is

no desire to possess anything else than what is needed to survive, and just the necessities with nothing in excess. Third, they avoid vain and frivolous talk. Fourth, they do not care about seeing friends or relatives, but I am their love and desire. Fifth, they desire to keep the humility inwardly in their conscience and outwardly in the way they dress. Sixth, they never have any will of leading lustful lives. Seventh, they beget sons and daughters for their God through their good behavior and good example and through the preaching of spiritual words.

They preserve their faith undefiled when they stand outside the doors of my church where they give me their consent and I give them mine. They go up to my altar when they enjoy the spiritual delight of my Body and Blood in which delight they wish to be of one heart and one body and one will with me, and I, true God and man, mighty in heaven and on earth, shall be as the third with them and will fill their heart. The worldly spouses begin their marriage in lustful desires like brute beasts, and even worse than brute beasts! But these spiritual spouses begin in love and fear of God and do not bother to please anyone but me. The evil spirit fills and incites those in the worldly marriage to carnal lust where there is nothing but unclean stench, but those in the spiritual marriage are filled with my Spirit and inflamed with the fire of my love that will never fail them.

I am one God in three Persons, and one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Just as it is impossible for the Father to be separated from the Son and the Holy Spirit to be separated from them both, and as it is impossible for warmth to be separated from fire, so it is impossible for these spiritual spouses to be separated from me; I am always as the third with them. Once my body was ravaged and died in torments, but it will never more be hurt or die. Likewise, those who are incorporated into me with a true faith and a perfect will shall never die away from me; for wherever they stand or sit or walk, I am always as the third with them.”

[1] Natural Family Planning is sinful birth control (NFP)

Saint Caesar of Arles: “AS OFTEN AS HE KNOWS HIS WIFE WITHOUT A DESIRE FOR CHILDREN...WITHOUT A DOUBT HE COMMITS SIN.” (W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of The Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2233)

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 53-56), Dec. 31, 1930: “But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

“Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes, ‘Intercourse even with one’s legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of offspring is prevented.’ Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it (Gen. 38:8-10).”

In reality, the argument against Natural Family Planning can be summed up very simply. Catholic dogma teaches us that the primary purpose of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

“Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of

morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offence against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.”

Therefore, even though NFP does not directly interfere with the marriage act itself, as its defenders love to stress, it makes no difference. NFP is condemned because it subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.

NFP subordinates the primary end of marriage to other things, by deliberately attempting to avoid children (i.e., to avoid the primary end) while having marital relations. NFP therefore inverts the order established by God Himself. It does the very thing that Pope Pius XI solemnly teaches may not lawfully be done. And this point crushes all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP; because all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP focus on the marriage act itself, while they blindly ignore the fact that it makes no difference if a couple does not interfere with the act itself if they subordinate and thwart the primary PURPOSE of marriage.

Despite this Magisterial teaching which condemns Natural Family Planning, simple logic will tell Catholics that it is wrong. If the Church has condemned artificial contraception because it prevents the conception of offspring, why would it be permissible to do the same thing by means of a different method? It is as if the desire or thought to murder someone is not sinful according to NFP advocates, but only the act of murder.

In publications promoting NFP, the fertile period of the wife is sometimes classified as “not safe” and “dangerous,” as though generating new life were considered a serious breach of national

security and a little infant a treacherous criminal! This is truly abominable.

Could it be more clear that those who subscribe to this type of behavior and this method shut God and children out and replace them with their own selfish agenda?

Tobias 6:17 – “The holy youth Tobias approaches his bride Sara after three days of prayer, not for fleshly lust but only for the love of posterity. Having been instructed by the Archangel Saint Raphael that to engage in the marital act he must be moved rather for love of children than for lust. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the Devil hath power.”

The word matrimony means “the office of motherhood.” Those who use NFP attempt to avoid matrimony (the office of motherhood) and shut out God from themselves.

Natural Family Planning also involves a lack of faith on the part of those who use and promote it. Do the couples who use NFP, or the priests who promote it, possess supernatural faith in the providence of God? Do they believe that God is the one who sends life? Does anyone have a right to have 3 children when God willed them to have 10? God is perfectly aware of each couple’s needs, and he knows precisely what they can handle. Those with the true Catholic Faith should be totally unconcerned with charts and calendars. These are all unnatural instruments which frustrate God’s will. Disregard this nonsense and accept the fact that God will not send you any children that you cannot handle. He will not burden you with anything too heavy, for His yoke is always easy and His burden always light. If NFP’ers had their way, there wouldn’t be any families with over 10 children, nor the many saints who came from these families (e.g., Saint Catherine of Siena, 23rd child of 25). Priests who promote “Natural” Family Limitation, and couples who use it, are guilty of serious sin. It is contrary to the teaching of the Church, and it is contrary to the natural law. It is an insult to the providence of God,

and it is an utter lack of faith. Why will you not practice chastity instead of committing the mortal sin of NFP. True sanctification comes through the virtue of chastity! When man and wife desire to have marital relations only to satisfy their lusts, they are truly like murderers. The only allowable reason to have marital relations for a couple is so that they may receive offspring to honor and glorify God. The Pope's Magisterial teaching, the Bible, and Our Lord's words in St. Bridget's Revelations among countless of other saints and doctors all condemn such actions as mortally sinful. As you can read, no reason, however grave can be accepted which subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.

Pope Pius XI, Casti Connubii (#'s 53-56), Dec. 31, 1930: "But no reason, however grave..." Hell will be long for those who practice NFP against the natural law. We implore all priests and laymen to accept the Church's teaching on this topic, and regain faith in God's providence. If you have been convinced to believe in this abominable heresy that contradicts the natural law, repent and confess your sin immediately.

[Here is a more detailed article about Natural Family Planning \(NFP\) Click here!](#)

The Virgin Mary's words to the bride about how there are three things in the dance and company of the world, and about how this world is symbolized by the dance, and about Mary's suffering at her Son's death.

Chapter 27

The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the bride and said: "My daughter, I want you to know that where there is a dance, there are three things: namely, empty joy, loud shouting, and useless and vain work. But when someone enters the dance house sorrowful or sad, then his friend, who attends in the joy of the dance sees his friend coming there sad and sorrowful, immediately leaves the joy of the

dance and separates himself from the dance and mourns with his sorrowing friend.

This dance is this world that is always caught up in trouble, even though it seems like joy to foolish men. In this world there are three things: empty joy, frivolous words, and useless work, because everything that a man gathers by his work he must leave behind himself. The one who joins in this worldly dance should consider my labor and sorrow and then mourn with me, who was separated from all worldly joy, and then separate himself from the world.

At my Son's death I was like a woman whose heart had been pierced by five spears. The first spear was his shameful and blameworthy nakedness, for I saw my most beloved and mighty Son stand naked at the pillar without any clothing to cover him at all. The second spear was the accusation against him, for they accused him of being a traitorous betrayer and liar, him, whom I knew to be righteous and true and never to have offended or wished to offend or injure anyone. The third spear was his crown of thorns that pierced his sacred head so violently that the blood flowed down into his mouth and his beard and ears. The fourth spear was his sorrowful voice on the cross with which he cried out to the Father, saying: 'O Father, why have you abandoned me?' It was as if he wanted to say: 'O Father, there is no one who pities me but you.' The fifth spear which pierced my heart, was his most bitter and cruel death. My heart was pierced with as many spears as the arteries from which his most precious blood flowed out of him. In truth, the pain in his pierced sinews, arteries, feet, hands and body went mercilessly to his heart and from the heart back to his sinews; for his heart was healthy and strong and of the finest nature, and life contended long with death; and thus his life was prolonged in the midst of the most bitter pain.

But when his death drew near and his heart burst from the unendurable pain, then his whole body shook and his head, which was bent backwards, raised itself a little. His half-closed eyes opened, and likewise his mouth was opened so that his bloodied tongue was seen. His fingers and arms, which were as if paralyzed, stretched themselves out. But when he had given up his spirit, his head sank toward his

chest, his hands lowered themselves a little from the place of the wounds and his feet had to bear most of the weight of the body.

Then my hands became numb, my eyes were darkened, and my face became pale as a dead man. My ears could hear nothing, my mouth could not speak, my feet trembled, and my body fell to the ground. When I got up from the ground and saw my Son looking horribly disfigured and more miserable than a leper, I submitted my entire will to his knowing with certainty that everything had happened according to his will and could not have happened unless he had allowed it. I therefore thanked him for everything, and so there was always some joy mixed with my sadness, because I saw that he, who had never sinned, had, in his great love, wanted to suffer this much for the sins of mankind. Therefore, may all those who are in the world contemplate how I suffered when my Son died and always have it in front of their eyes and in their thoughts!”

The words of the Lord to the bride about how a man came to be judged before God's tribunal, and about the fearsome and horrendous judgment passed on him by God and all the saints.

Chapter 28

The bride of Christ saw God looking angry, and he said: “I am without beginning and without end. There is no change in me either of year or day, but all time in this world is like a single second or moment to me. Everyone who sees me, sees and knows and understands everything that is in me in a moment. But since you, my bride, are in a material body, you cannot perceive and understand like a spirit, and therefore, for your sake, I will explain to you what has happened.

I was seated as a judge, for all judgment has been given to me, and a man came before my judgment seat to be judged. The voice of the Father thundered and said to him: ‘Woe unto you that you ever were born!’ God did not say this because he had repented of having

created him, but it was just like anyone mourning for another and feeling compassion for him. Thereafter, the voice of the Son answered saying: 'I shed my blood for you and suffered the most bitter and harsh pain for you, but you have separated yourself entirely from it and will have nothing to do with it.'

The voice of the Holy Spirit said: 'I have searched all the corners of his heart to see if I might find some tenderness or love in his heart, but he is as cold as ice and as hard as stone, and I have nothing to do with him.' These three voices have not been heard audibly as if there were three gods, but they were heard for your sake, my bride, because you would not be able to understand these spiritual mysteries otherwise.

Thereafter, the three voices of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were immediately transformed into a single voice, and this voice thundered and said: 'By no means shall the kingdom of Heaven be given to you!' The Mother of mercy, the Virgin Mary, was silent and did not open up her mercy, for he who was to be judged was unworthy to receive or enjoy her mercy; and all the saints cried out with one voice saying: 'It is divine justice for him to be eternally exiled and separated from your kingdom and from your joy.'

All those who were in the fires of purgatory said: 'No pain here is so bitter or harsh that it is enough to punish your sins; you deserve to endure much greater torments and you will therefore be severed from us.' But then the wretched man himself cried out in a fearsome voice, saying: 'Woe, woe for the seed that came together in my mother's womb and from which I received my body!' He called out a second time, saying: 'Accursed be the moment when my soul was joined to my body and accursed be he who gave me a body and soul!' He called out a third time: 'Accursed be the moment when I came forth alive from the womb of my mother!'

Then came three horrendous voices against him from hell saying: 'Come to us, accursed soul, like liquid copper draining down, to eternal death and life everlasting!' They called out a second time: 'Come, accursed soul, empty of all goodness, and receive our malice!'

For there will be none of us who will not fill you with his own malice and pain.’ They called out a third time: ‘Come, accursed soul, heavy like the stone that sinks down perpetually and never reaches the bottom where it can rest! You will sink deeper into the deep than we, so that you will not stop until you have reached the lowest part of hell.’

Then our Lord said: ‘Just like the man who had several wives who sees one of them fall away from him and turns away from her, and turns to the others who remain steadfast in his will and rejoices with them, so too have I turned my face and my mercy away from him, and I turn to my servants and rejoice with them. Therefore, when you have heard of his fall and misery, you shall serve me with so much greater sincerity and purity in proportion to the greater mercy I have shown to you. Flee the world and her desire! I did not accept such a bitter suffering for the sake of worldly glory or because I was unable to fulfill it more quickly or easily, - for I could have – but, justice demanded that because humanity sinned in every limb, so must also satisfaction be made in every limb. This was why the Divinity felt compassion for mankind, and in his burning and great love for the Virgin, assumed Manhood from her through which he would suffer all the punishment mankind was destined to suffer. Since I took your punishment upon me out of love, you should remain in true humility, just like my servants, so that you will not be ashamed before anyone and fear nothing but me. Guard your mouth in such a way that, if such were my will, you would never speak. Do not be saddened about worldly things, for they will perish, and I am able to make whomever I want rich or poor. Therefore, my bride, place all your hope in me and I will help you”

EXPLANATION

This man whose judgment is here proclaimed was a nobleman, canon and subdeacon, who received a false dispensation and married a rich virgin but was surprised by a sudden death and thus lost what he desired.

The words of the Virgin to the daughter about two wives, one of whom is called Pride and the other Humility (the latter signifying the most sweet Virgin Mary), and about how the Virgin Mary comes to meet those who love her at the moment of their death.

Chapter 29

The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the Son's bride and said: "There are two wives. One of them has no special name, because she is too unworthy to have a name. The other wife is Humility, and she is called Mary. The devil himself is lord over the first wife because he has control over her. This wife's knight said to her: 'O my wife, I am ready to do anything I can for you, if only I can satisfy my sexual lust with you just once. I am mighty and strong and brave of heart, I fear nothing and am ready to go to my death for you.' She answered him: 'My servant, your love for me is great. But I am seated on a high throne, and I have only this one throne, and there are three gates between us.

The first gate is so narrow that all that a man is wearing on his body gets pulled off and torn to pieces if he enters by this gate. The second one is so sharp that it cuts through even to the very sinews of the man. The third gate is burning with such a fire that there is no escape or rest for him from its heat but, instead, anyone entering through this gate is immediately melted down like copper. In addition, I am seated so high up on my throne that anyone who wants to sit next to me – for I have only one throne – will fall down into the greatest depth under me.' The knight answered her: 'I will give my life for you and the fall does not bother me.'

This wife is Pride and the one who wants to come to her must go, as it were, through three gates. Through the first gate enters the one who gives all he has for human praise and for the sake of pride. And if he does not own anything, he uses all of his will to have a reason to be proud and win praise of men. Through the second gate enters the one who sacrifices all his work and everything he does, all his time and all his thoughts and all his strength so that he may fulfill his pride. And

even if he could give his own flesh over to be wounded for the sake of pride and honor and riches, he would do so willingly. Through the third gate enters the one who never rests or has peace but entirely burns like fire with the thought of how he may attain some honor or something he may feel worldly pride over. But when he attains his desire, he cannot stay in the same state but falls painfully and miserably; however, pride still remains in the world.”

“But I,” Mary said, “am the one who is most humble. I am seated on a spacious throne and above me there is neither sun nor moon nor stars nor even a sky, but a wonderful and unimaginable clear light proceeding from the beauty of God’s majesty. Below me there is neither earth nor stone but only an incomparable sweet rest in God’s virtue. Around me there is neither barrier nor wall but only the glorious host of angels and holy souls. And although I am seated so high, I still hear my friends who are in the world, daily pouring out their sighs and tears to me. I view their work and their perfection to be greater than that of those who fight for their wife Pride.

I shall therefore visit them with my mercy and help and place them near me on my throne, for it is very spacious and can house everyone. But they cannot come to me or sit with me yet, for there are still two walls between us which I shall lead them securely over so that they may come to my throne. The first wall is the world, and it is narrow. Therefore, my servants in the world shall be consoled by me. The second wall is death. Therefore, I, their most dear Lady and Mother, shall come to meet them and run to them at their death, so that even in death they will feel encouraged and consoled! I will place them together with me on the throne of heavenly joy, so that they, in limitless joy, may rest eternally in the delight of God and in his sweet arms and love of eternal glory and unimaginable joy.”

The words of our loving Lord to his bride about how the many false Christians are being multiplied, and about how they are crucifying him again, and about how he is still prepared to suffer death once more for the sake of sinful people, if this were possible.

Chapter 30

“I am the God who created all things for the benefit of man in order that all things should serve and help him. But mankind misuses all the things I created for his benefit unto his own damnation, and he cares less about God and loves him less than the created world. The Jews prepared three kinds of torture tools for my suffering: First, the wood on which I, scourged and crowned, was crucified. Second, the iron by which they pierced through my hands and feet. Third, the gall that they gave me to drink. Thereafter, they insulted me calling me a fool because of the death I gladly endured, and they called me a liar because of my teachings. Such men are now many in the world and there are very few who console me.

They crucify me on the wood through their will to sin, they scourge me through their impatience (no one can namely endure a single word for my sake) and they crown me with the thorns of their pride when they want to be raised higher and have more honor than I want them to have. They pierce my hands and feet with hardened iron when they praise their sin and harden themselves so that they should not have to fear me. As the drink of gall, they offer me sorrow. They call me a liar and a fool for the suffering which I went to and gladly endured.

I am powerful enough to kill and drown all my enemies and the entire world in one moment for the sake of their sins, if I wanted. But if I did drown them, the ones remaining would serve me out of fear, and that would not be right, because mankind should serve me out of love and not because of fear. If I myself came to them in a visible shape, their eyes would not endure to see me or their ears to hear me. For how could a mortal human endure to look upon an immortal? Truly, in my love, I would gladly die again for the sake of mankind, if it were possible.

Then the Holy Virgin Mary appeared and the Son of God said to her: “What do you wish, my chosen Mother?” And she said: “O my Son, have mercy on your creation for the sake of my love.” He

answered: “I will show them my mercy once again, for your sake.” Thereafter, our Lord spoke to his bride and said: “I am your God and the Lord of the angels. I am Lord over life and death. I myself want to live in your heart. See what a great love I have for you! The heavens and the earth and all the things in them cannot contain me, and yet I want to live in your heart, which is only a little piece of flesh. Whom could you then fear or what could you need when you have inside you God Almighty in whom all good things are?

There should be three things in the heart where I live: First, there should be a bed where we may rest. Second, there should be a seat where we may sit. Third, there should be a lamp that gives us light. In your heart there should be a bed to rest in so that you can rest from evil thoughts and worldly desires and always remember and contemplate the joy of eternity. The seat should be your will of staying close to me, even if it sometimes happens that you have to go out. For it is against nature to be always standing or sitting. But the one who is always standing is the one who always has the will of being with the world and never to sit with me. The light shall be the faith by which you believe that I am able to do all things and am almighty over all things.”

About how the bride saw the most sweet Virgin Mary adorned with a crown and other adornments of indescribable beauty, and about how Saint John the Baptist explains to the bride the meaning of the crown and the other adornments.

Chapter 31

The bride of God saw the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, wearing a priceless and beautiful crown on her head and her wonderfully shining and indescribably beautiful hair hanging down over her shoulders, with a golden tunic shining with an indescribable light, and a blue mantle of the color azure or a clear sky. When the bride of God, Saint Bridget, was full of wonder at such a lovely sight, and in her wonderment was standing there totally enraptured and amazed, then blessed John the Baptist appeared to her and said:

“Listen closely to what all this signifies. The crown signifies that she is the Queen and Lady and Mother of the King of angels; the hair hanging down signifies that she is an unstained and pure virgin; the sky colored mantle signifies that all worldly things were as dead in her heart and will; the golden tunic signifies that she was fervent and burning in the love of God, both inwardly and outwardly. Her Son, Jesus Christ, placed seven lilies in her crown, and between the lilies he placed seven gems.

The first lily is her humility; the second lily is her fear; the third, her obedience; the fourth, her patience; the fifth, her steadfastness; the sixth, her kindness, for she is kind and gives to all who beg of her with love and a will to amend; the seventh, her mercy in difficulties, for in whatever difficulty a man may be in, if he calls on her with all his heart, he will receive mercy and help from her because she is full of compassion and mercy.

Between these shining lilies her Son placed seven precious gem stones. The first gem is her incomparable virtue, for there is no virtue in any other spirit or in any other body, which she does not have in a higher fashion. The second gem is her perfect purity, for the Queen of the kingdom of Heaven was so pure that from her first entrance into the world up to the final day of her death, not a single stain of sin was ever to be found in her; and none of all the devils could ever find enough impurity in her to fit on the head of a needle-point. She was truly the most pure, for it was not fitting for the King of glory to lie in any vessel but the purest, chosen before all angels and men and more pure than they. The third gem was her beauty, for God is praised constantly by his saints for his Mother’s beauty, and all the holy angels and holy souls are filled with joy over her beauty. The fourth precious gem in the crown is the Virgin Mother’s wisdom, for she is filled with all divine wisdom in God and all wisdom is fulfilled and perfected through her. The fifth gem is her power and might, for she is so powerful and strong with God in her that she can subdue anything that has been created. The sixth gem is her clarity, for she shines so clear that she even illuminates the angels, whose eyes are clearer than light, and the devils do not dare to look upon her clarity. The seventh gem is the fullness of every delight and joy and all spiritual sweetness,

for her fullness is such that there is no joy that she does not increase, no delight that is not made fuller and more perfect by her and through the blessed vision of her, for she is filled with grace and mercy above all the holy saints. She is the most pure vessel in which the Bread of angels laid and in which all sweetness and all beauty is found.

Between the seven lilies in her crown, her Son placed these seven gemstones. Therefore may you, her Son's bride, honor and praise her with all your heart, for she is in truth worthy of all praise and all honor with her Son!"

About how, on God's exhortation, the bride of Christ chose poverty for herself and renounced riches and carnal behavior, and about the truth of the things revealed to her, and about three remarkable things that Christ showed her.

Chapter 32

Our Lord said to his bride: "You should be like a person who leaves and like one who gathers. For you should leave riches and gather virtues, leave perishable things and gather eternal things, leave visible things and gather invisible. I shall namely give you the exultation of the soul instead of the pleasures of the flesh, the joy of heaven instead of the joy of the world, the honor of the angels instead of the honor of the world, the sight of God instead of the sight of your friends; I, the giver and Creator of all good things, will give you myself, instead of the possession of worldly goods.

Answer me on the three things I am going to ask you. First, do you want to be rich or poor in this world?" She answered: "O my Lord, I would rather be poor since riches do me no good; instead they bother and distract me very much and draw me away from serving you." "Tell me, second, do you find anything reprehensible or false according to your conscience and heart in the words that you heard from my mouth?" She answered: "Certainly not, all your words are reasonable." Our Lord said for the third time: "What delights you more, the sensual lust of the flesh you earlier had or the spiritual

consolation and delight that you now have?” She answered: “I feel ashamed and disgraced in my heart to think of my earlier fleshly lust and it is now to me like poison and tastes all the more bitter in proportion to my earlier ardent love for it. I would rather die than ever return to such a lust; it cannot be compared to this spiritual delight and happiness.”

“Thus,” our Lord said, “you confess in your mind that all the things I have told you are true. Why then are you afraid and worried that I am delaying the things I told you would happen? Behold the prophets and remember the apostles and the holy teachers of the Church. Did they find anything in me except the truth? That is why they did not care about the world or the desire for it. Why else did the prophets foretell the future things so far in advance unless it was because God wanted them first to proclaim the words with the deeds coming after so that the ignorant should be taught in the faith? In truth, all the mysteries of my Holy Incarnation were proclaimed to the prophets before I assumed manhood and became man, even the star that went before the three kings. They believed the words of the prophet and deserved to see what they believed in, and they were made certain immediately after they saw the star. In the same way now, my words should first be announced so that, when the deeds come later, they will be believed more surely.

I showed you three things. First, the conscience of a man whose sin I revealed and proved to you by the most clear and evident signs. But why did I do so? Could I not have killed him myself? Or could I not have drowned him in a moment, if I wanted? Of course I could have. But, so that others may be instructed and my words revealed showing how just and patient I am and how unhappy this man is whom the devil rules, I endure him still. Because of his evil will of remaining in sin and through his sinful lust in it, the devil’s power over him has increased so much that neither gentle words nor harsh threats nor the fear of hell can make him turn back from his sin. And this is true justice too, because, since he always had the will of sinning, even though he did not fulfill his sin by deed, he rightly deserves to be handed over to the devil for all eternity. For the

smallest sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent.

I showed you two others. The devil tormented the body of one but was not in his soul. He darkened the other's conscience through his intrigues and yet did not get into his soul and had no power over him. But now you might ask: 'Is not the soul the same as the conscience? Is the devil not in the soul when he is in the conscience?' By no means! The body has two eyes to see with, and even if they lose their sight, the body can still be healthy. So it is with the soul. For even though the reason and conscience are sometimes distracted and troubled, nevertheless, the soul does not always get hurt by the sin. And thus, the devil had power over his conscience but not over his soul.

I shall show you a third man whose soul and body are completely ruled by the devil, and unless he is forced by my power and by my special grace, he will never be expelled from the man or leave him. From some people, the devil goes out willingly and quickly, but out of others, only reluctantly and by force. For in some people the devil enters because of the sin of their parents or because of some hidden judgment of God; this happens for example with children and witless men. He enters into others because of their infidelity or for the sake of some other sin. From these, the devil goes out willingly if he is exorcised by people who know conjurations or the art on how to exorcise devils. If they undertake such an exorcism for the sake of vainglory or for some worldly gain, then the devil has the power of entering into the one exorcising him, or again, into the same person he got exorcised from, for neither of them had any love of God. From those whose soul and body the devil possesses completely, he never goes out, unless he is forced through my power. Just as vinegar, if mixed with a sweet and good wine, spoils all the sweetness of the wine and can never be separated from it, so too will the devil not go out of the soul whom he possesses, unless he is forced through my divine power.

What is this wine if not the human soul that was sweeter to me above all created beings and so dear to me that I let my sinews be slashed and my body lacerated to the ribs for her sake? I suffered

death for her sake rather than lose her. This wine was conserved in dregs, for I placed the soul in a body where it was kept according to my will as in a sealed vessel. But now this sweet wine has been mixed with the worst vinegar, that is, with the malice of the devil, whose evilness is more bitter and abominable to me than any vinegar. By my power, this vinegar shall be separated from this man whose name I will tell you, so that I may show my mercy and wisdom through him, but my judgment and justice through the former man.”

EXPLANATION

The first man was a high-born and proud cantor who, without the pope’s permission, went to Jerusalem and was attacked by the devil. About this demon-possessed man more can be read in book III, chapter 31 and in book IV, chapter 115. The second demon-possessed man in the same chapter became a Cistercian monk. The devil tormented him so much that four men could barely hold him down. His outstretched tongue looked like an ox tongue. The shackles on his hands were invisibly broken in pieces. After a month and two days this man was cured by Saint Bridget. The third demon-possessed man was a bailiff of Ostergotland. When he was admonished to do penance, he said to the one advising him: “Cannot the owner of the house sit where he likes? The devil has my heart and my tongue, how can I do penance?” He also cursed the saints of God and died the same night without the sacraments and confession.

Our Lord’s words of admonishment to the bride about true and false wisdom, and about how good angels aid the wise who are good while devils aid the wise who are evil.

Chapter 33

“My friends are like scholars who have three things: First, a reasonable understanding above what is natural to the brain. Second, wisdom without human aid, for I myself teach them inwardly. Third, they are full of the sweetness and divine love with which they defeat

the devil. But nowadays people study in a different way. First, they want to be wise out of vainglory in order to be called good clerks and masterly scholars. Second, they want to be wise in order to own and win riches. Third, they want to be wise in order to win honors and privileges.

That is why I leave them when they go to their schools and enter there, since they study because of pride, but I taught them humility. They enter the schools for the sake of greed, but I had no place to rest my head. They enter in order to win privileges, envying those more highly placed than themselves, but I was judged by Pilate and mocked by Herod. That is why I will leave them, because they are not learning my wisdom. But, since I am good and kind, I give each one what he prays for. The one who prays for bread will receive bread. And the one who prays for straw will be given straw.

My friends pray for bread, because they seek and learn the wisdom of God where my love is. But others, however, pray for straw, that is, worldly wisdom. For just as straw is useless for man to eat but, is instead, the food of irrational animals, so too there is neither use for the worldly wisdom that they seek nor nourishment for the soul, but only a small name and useless work. For when a man dies, all his wisdom is eradicated into nothing and he can no longer be seen by those who used to praise him.

I am like a mighty lord with many servants who, on their lord's way, give to the people what they need. In this way the good angels and the evil angels stand in my service. The good angels minister to those who study my wisdom, that is, those who work in my service, nourishing them with consolation and pleasing work. But the worldly wise are assisted by evil angels who inspire them with what they want and form them after their will, inspiring them with thoughts of great speculation with much work. But if they would look to me, I could give them bread and wisdom without any work or trouble and a sufficient amount of the world to satisfy them. But they can never be filled of the world, since they turn that which is sweet into bitterness for themselves.

But you, my bride, should be like cheese, and your body like the mold wherein the cheese is formed until it has received the form of the mold. In this way, your soul, which is as delightful and sweet to me as cheese, must be tried and cleansed in the body, until body and soul united agree to maintain the same form of abstinence, so that the flesh obeys the spirit and the spirit leads the flesh toward all virtues.

The teaching of Christ to his bride about how she should live, and also about how the devil admits to Christ that the bride loves Christ above all things, and about how the devil asks Christ why he loves her so much, and about the love that Christ has for the bride.

Chapter 34

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I was true God and true man in the Virgin’s womb and I rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. You, my new bride, have come to an unknown place. Therefore, you must do four things: First, you must know the language of the place. Second, you must have proper clothes. Third, you must know how to organize your days and your time according to the custom of the place. Fourth, you must become accustomed to the new food.

So, since you have come from the instability of the world to stability, you must learn a new language, that is, the abstinence from useless and vain words and sometimes even from permissible ones in order to observe the importance and virtue of silence. Second, your clothes should be humble both in the interior and exterior so that you do not extol yourself inwardly as being holier than others nor are outwardly ashamed to be seen as humble before people. Third, your time should be ordered in such a way that, just as you before used to have much time for the needs of the body, so now you should only have time for the soul, that is, to never again want to sin against me. Fourth, your new food is abstinence from gluttony and from delicacies with all prudence, as far as your human nature can endure it. The

abstinence that goes beyond the capacity of human nature is not pleasing to me, for I demand the rational and the taming of lusts.

Then the devil appeared in the same moment. Our Lord said to him: “You were created by me and have seen all justice in me. Answer me now whether this new bride of mine is lawfully mine by proven justice. For I allow you to see and understand her heart so that you may know how to answer me. Does she love anything else as much as me or would she take anything in exchange for me?”

The devil answered: “She loves nothing as much as you, and rather than losing you, she would suffer any torment, if only you gave her the virtue of patience. I see like a bond of fire descending from you to her and it ties her heart so much that she thinks of and loves nothing but you.” Then our Lord said to the devil: “Tell me how she pleases your heart or how you like this great love I have for her.” The devil said: “I have two eyes; one is corporeal, although I am not corporeal, and with this eye I perceive temporal things so clearly that there is nothing so secret or dark that it could hide itself from me. The second eye is spiritual, and I see so clearly with it that there is no pain so small that I cannot see and understand to which sin it belongs. And there is no sin so small or slight that I do not see it, unless it has been purged by repentance and penance. But, although there are no body parts more sensitive and vulnerable than the eyes, I would still much rather desire that two burning torches without end penetrated my eyes than for her to see with the eyes of the spirit.

I also have two ears. One is corporeal, and no one can speak so secretly and silently that I do not immediately hear and know it through this ear. The second ear is spiritual, and no one can have such a secret thought or desire for any sin, that I do not hear it through this ear, unless it has been washed away by penance. And I would gladly prefer that the suffering of hell, surging forward like a stream and spreading the most terrible hot fire without end flowed through my ears than that she should hear anything with the ears of the spirit. I also have a spiritual heart, and I would gladly let it be ceaselessly cut to pieces and constantly renewed to the same suffering in order for her heart to grow cold in your service and love.

But, since you are righteous, I now have a question for you that you may answer. Tell me, why do you love her so much? Why did you not choose someone holier, richer and prettier for yourself?" Our Lord answered: "Because justice demanded this. You were created by me and have seen all justice in me. Tell me, while she is listening, why it was justice that you should have such a bad fall and what you were thinking when you fell!"

The devil answered: "I saw three things in you. I saw your glory and honor being above all things, and I thought about my own glory. For this reason I became proud and decided to not merely become your equal, but to be even higher than you. Second, I saw that you were mightier than all others, and therefore I desired to be more mighty than you. Third, I saw what would happen in the future, and since your glory and honor are without beginning and would be without end, I envied you and thought that I would gladly be tortured forever by the most bitter punishment if, thereby, you would die. And with such thoughts and desires I fell, and immediately hell was created."

Our Lord answered: "You asked me why I love my bride so much. Assuredly, it is because I change all your malice into good. For since you became proud and did not want to have me, your Creator, as your equal, therefore, humiliating myself in all things, I gather sinners to myself and make myself their equal by giving them my glory. Second, since you had such an evil desire that you wanted to be more mighty than I, therefore I make sinners more mighty than you and partakers in my power. Third, because of your envy against me, I am so full of love that I offered myself up and sacrificed myself for the sake of everyone through my death." Thereafter, our Lord said: "Now, devil, your dark heart is enlightened. Tell me, while she is listening, what love I have for her."

The devil answered: "If it were possible, you would gladly suffer the same pain in each and every limb just as you once suffered on the cross in all your limbs, before losing her." Then our Lord answered: "Since I am so merciful that I do not refuse my mercy and forgiveness

to anyone asking for it, ask me then humbly for mercy yourself, and I will give it to you.” The devil answered: “Never shall I do this. For when I fell, a punishment was established for every sin and for every worthless word and thought. And every spirit or devil that fell will have his punishment. And before I would bend my knee before you, I would rather swallow all the punishments in me, as long as my mouth could be opened and closed in punishment, so that my punishment would be forever renewed.”

Then our Lord said to his bride: “See how hardened the lord of the world is and how mighty he is against me because of my hidden justice. I could indeed destroy him in a moment through my power, but I do no more injustice to him than to a good angel in the kingdom of Heaven. But when his time comes, and it is now approaching, I shall judge him with his followers. Therefore, my bride, may you always persevere in good deeds. Love me with all your heart. Fear nothing but me. I am namely the Lord over the devil and over all things created.”

The Virgin Mary’s words to the bride about her own sorrow at the suffering of Christ, and about how the world was sold through Adam and Eve and bought back as with one heart through Christ and his Virgin Mother.

Chapter 35

Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the bride of Christ and said: “My daughter, consider the suffering of my Son, for his limbs were like my own limbs and his heart like my own heart. For just as other children use to be carried in the womb of their mother, so was he in me. But he was conceived through the burning charity of God’s love. Others, however are conceived through the lust of the flesh. Thus, John the evangelist, his cousin, rightly says: ‘The Word was made flesh.’ He came through love and was in me. The Word and love created him in me. He was truly for me like my own heart. For when I gave birth to him, I felt as though half my heart was born and went out of me. And when he endured suffering, it felt like my own heart was

suffering. Just as when something is half inside and half outside - the half outside feels pain and suffering, but the inside also feels a similar pain - so it was for me when my Son was scourged and wounded; it was as if my own heart was scourged and wounded.

I was also the one closest to him at his suffering and I was never separated from him. I stood very near his cross, and just like that which is closest to the heart stings the worst, so his pain was heavier and worse for me than for others. When he looked at me from the cross and I saw him, then tears flowed from my eyes like blood from veins. And when he saw me so stricken with pain and overwhelming sorrow, he felt such a sorrow over my pain that all the pain of his own wounds became as subsided and dead for the sake of the pain he saw in me. I can therefore boldly say that his pain was my pain since his heart was my heart. For just as Adam and Eve sold the world for an apple, so my Son and I bought back the world as with one heart. Consider therefore, my daughter, how I was at the death of my Son, and it will not be hard for you to give up the world and her cares.”

Our Lord's answer to an angel who was praying that sorrow in body and soul should be given to the bride, and about how even greater sorrow should be given to more perfect souls.

Chapter 36

An angel was praying for his Lord's bride and our Lord answered him: “You are like a knight of the Lord who never took off his helmet for the sake of sloth and who never turned his eyes away from the battle for the sake of fear. You are steadfast as a mountain and burning like a flame. You are so pure that there is no stain in you. You beg me to have mercy on my bride. You know and see all things in me. Nevertheless, while she is listening, tell me what kind of mercy you are asking for her; for mercy is namely threefold.

One is the mercy by which the body is punished and tortured and the soul is spared, as it happened with my servant Job whose flesh had

to suffer all kinds of pain and torment but whose soul was protected. The second mercy is the one by which soul and body are spared from torment, as it was in the case of the king who lived in all sorts of lust and worldly pleasure and had no pain either in body or soul while he lived in the world. The third mercy is the one by which soul and body are punished, so that they have distress in their flesh and sorrow in their heart, as it happened with Peter and Paul and other saints.

For there are three states for humans in the world: The first state is that of those who fall into sin and get up again; these do I sometimes allow to suffer in their bodies so that they may be saved. The second state is that of those who would gladly live forever to be able to sin forever and who have all of their will and thought directed to the world, and if they do anything for me at any time, they do it with the intention of their worldly possessions growing and prospering. Neither punishment of the body nor very much pain of the heart is given to these people, but instead they are allowed to follow their own power and will, because they will receive a reward here for the least little good they have done for me to then be tormented for all eternity. For since their will to sin is everlasting, their torment shall also be everlasting. The third state is that of those who are more afraid of sinning against me and offending me than they fear any torment. They would rather endure to be tortured with unbearable pain in eternity than consciously provoke me to wrath. Sorrow of body and heart are given to these men, as with Peter and Paul and other saints, so that they may amend for all their sins in this world, or so that they may be chastised for a time for the sake of their greater glory and as an example to others. I have shown this threefold mercy to three persons in this kingdom whose names are well known to you.

But now, my angel and servant, tell me, for what kind of mercy do you pray for my bride?" He answered: "I pray for the mercy of her soul and body, so that she may amend for all her sins in this world and so that none of her sins may come before your judgment." Our Lord answered: "May it be done according to your will." Then he said to the bride: "You are mine and I will do with you as I please. Love nothing as much as me. Purify yourself constantly from sin every hour according to the advice of those I have entrusted you to. Hide no sin!

Leave nothing unexamined! Do not consider any sin to be light or worthy of disregard! For anything you forget, I will remind you of and judge. None of the sins you have done will come before my judgment if they are punished and expiated through your penance while you live. But those sins for which you made no penance will be purged either in purgatory or by some secret judgment of mine, unless you make a full satisfaction and amendment for them here in the world.”

The words of the Virgin Mother to the bride about the excellence of her Son, and about how Christ is now being crucified more cruelly by his enemies, the evil Christians, than he once was by the Jews, and about how such people will receive a harder and more bitter punishment.

Chapter 37

The Queen of Heaven said: “My Son had three good things: The first one was that no one ever had such a beautiful body as he did, since he had two perfect natures, namely, his Divinity and Manhood. His body was so pure that, just as no stain can be found in the clearest of eyes, so not a single defect could be found on his body. The second good was that he never sinned. Other children, however, sometimes bear the sins of their parents and sometimes their own; but he never sinned and yet bore the sins of everyone. The third good was that some men die for the sake of God and to receive a greater reward, but he died just as much for the sake of his enemies as for me and his friends.

When his enemies crucified him, they did four things to him: First, they crowned him with a crown of thorns. Second, they pierced his hands and feet. Third, they gave him gall to drink. Fourth, they pierced his side. But now I complain that the enemies of my Son, who are now in the world, crucify him more cruelly in a spiritual sense than the Jews who crucified his body. For even though the divinity is unable to suffer and die, still they crucify him through their own vices and sins. For if a man insults and injures an image of his enemy, the image does not feel the damage done to it; nevertheless, the

perpetrator should be accused and judged for his evil intention to do harm as though it was a deed. In the same way, the vices and sins by which they crucify my Son spiritually are more abominable and heavy to him than the vices of those who crucified his body.

But now you may ask: ‘How do they crucify him?’ First off, they fasten him on the cross they have prepared for him when they do not heed the commandments of their Creator and Lord, but dishonor him when he warns them through his servants to serve him, and they despise this and instead do what pleases them. Then they crucify his right hand when they hold justice to be as injustice, saying: ‘Sin is not so heavy and abominable to God as it is said. God does not punish anyone for all eternity; he only threatens us with these hard things to scare us. Why else would he redeem man if he wanted us to perish?’ They do not consider that the least little sin a man finds delight in is enough to damn him to an eternal torment, and that God does not let the least little sin go unpunished, just like he does not let the least little good deed go unrewarded.

Therefore, they shall be tormented for all eternity because of their constant intention of sinning, and my Son, who sees the heart, counts that as a deed. For they would fulfill their will with deeds if my Son tolerated or allowed it. Then they crucify his left hand when they turn virtue into sin and the will to continue in sin until the end, saying: ‘If we just once say at the end of our life, “O God, have mercy on me,” God’s mercy is so great that we will be forgiven.’ But this is not virtue - to want to sin without bettering oneself, and wanting to receive a reward without having to work for it, not unless a real contrition is found in the heart that the man wants to change if only he could do so were it not for illness or some other hindrance.

Thereafter, they crucify his feet when they take pleasure in sinning without once thinking of my Son’s bitter suffering or without once thanking him from their inmost heart with words like these: ‘My Lord and God, how bitter your suffering was, praise and honor be to you for your death’ – such words are never heard from their mouth. They then crown him with the crown of derision when they mock his servants and consider it useless to serve him. They give him gall to

drink when they rejoice and glory in sin. And not once does the thought arise in their heart of how grave and manifold and dangerous this sin is. They pierce his side when they have the will to continue in sin.

In truth, I tell you - and you can say this to my friends - that such people are more unjust in the sight of my Son than those who judged him, more unkind than those who crucified him, more shameless than those who sold him, and they shall therefore receive a greater torment than the others. Pilate knew very well that my Son had not sinned and did not deserve to die. But he, nonetheless, felt compelled to judge my Son to death because he feared the loss of his worldly power and the revolt of the Jews. But what would these have to fear if they served my Son, or what honor or dignity would they lose if they honored him? They will therefore be judged with a more severe sentence than Pilate's, for they are worse than him in my Son's sight. For Pilate judged him because of the request and will of others and due to fear, but these judge him for their own advantage and without any fear when they dishonor him by committing the sin that they could abstain from if they wanted. But they do not abstain from sin nor are they ashamed of the sins that they have done, for they do not consider that they are unworthy of the good deeds of the One whom they do not serve.

They are also worse than Judas, for when Judas had betrayed his Lord, he knew very well that he was God and that he had sinned heavily against him, but he despaired and hastened his days toward hell, thinking himself to be unworthy to live. But these know their sin very well and yet they continue in it without feeling any remorse about it in their hearts. They want to take the kingdom of Heaven with violence and power when they think they can get it, not through their good deeds but through a vain hope, but it is only given to those who work and suffer something for the sake of God.

They are also worse than those who crucified my Son. For when these saw the good works of my Son, namely, the raising of the dead and the cleansing of lepers, they thought to themselves: 'This man does unheard of and extraordinary miracles. He overcomes anyone he

wants with a word, he knows all our thoughts, and he does whatever he wants. If he is successful, we will all have to submit to his power and become his subjects.’ Therefore, in order to avoid being subjected to him, they crucified him because of their envy. But if they had known that he was the King of glory, they never would have crucified him.

But these people see his great deeds and miracles everyday, and they take advantage of his good deeds and hear how they should serve him and come to him, but they think to themselves: ‘If we must leave all our temporal belongings and follow his will and not our own, it would be heavy and unbearable.’ They despise his will so that it should not be placed over their own will, and crucify my Son through their hardened heart when they add sin upon sin against their conscience. They are worse than those who crucified my Son, for the Jews did it for the sake of envy and because they did not know that he was God, but these know him to be God, and yet, in their own malice and presumption and greed, they crucify him spiritually more cruelly than the Jews did physically. For they themselves have been redeemed, but the Jews had not yet been redeemed. Therefore, my bride, obey my Son and fear him, for just as he is merciful, he is also just.”

The most pleasant conversation of God the Father with the Son, and about how the Father gave the new bride to the Son, and how the Son received her with pleasure to himself, and about how the bridegroom teaches the bride about patience, obedience and simplicity through an example.

Chapter 38

The Father spoke to the Son, saying: “I came with love to the Virgin and took your true body from her. You are therefore in me and I in you. Just as fire and heat are never separated, so it is impossible to separate the Divinity from the Manhood.” The Son answered: “May all glory and honor be to you Father; may your will be done in me and mine in you.” The Father answered him again: “Behold, my Son, I am

entrusting this new bride to you like a sheep to be guided and educated. As the owner of the sheep, you will get from her cheese to eat and milk to drink and wool to clothe yourself with. But you, bride, should obey him. You have three things you must do: you have to be patient, obedient and willing to do what is good.”

Then the Son said to the Father: “Your will with power, power with humility, humility with wisdom, wisdom with mercy; may your will be done, which is and always will be without beginning or end in me. I take her to myself into my love, into your power and into the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which are not three gods but one God.” Then the Son said to his bride: “You have heard how the Father entrusted you to me like a sheep. You must therefore be simpleminded and patient like a sheep and fruitful in producing food and clothing.

Three people are in the world. The first is completely naked, the second is thirsty, and the third is hungry. The first signifies the faith of my Church, and it is naked because everyone is ashamed and afraid to speak of the true faith and of my commandments. And if some people do speak or teach about such things, they are despised and accused of being liars. Therefore, my words which proceed from my mouth, should clothe this faith like wool. For just as wool grows on the body of a sheep by the heat, so too my words proceed from the heat of my Divinity and Manhood to your heart. They will clothe my holy faith with the testimony of truth and wisdom and prove that the faith which is now regarded as vain is true, so that the ones who, up to now, have been lazy in clothing their faith in deeds of love after hearing my words of love, will be converted and enkindled again in order to speak with certitude of faith and act with power.

The second one signifies my friends who have a thirsting desire to make my honor perfect and are saddened at my dishonor. They shall be filled with the sweetness that they heard in my words, and enkindled with a greater love for me, and along with them, others who are now dead in sin, will also be enkindled in my love, when they hear of the mercy I have done with sinners.

The third one signifies those who think thus in their hearts: ‘If only we knew the will of God and how we should live, and if anyone taught us about the good way, we would gladly do what we could for the honor of God.’ These are hungry to get to know my way and will, but no one feeds them, since no one shows them completely what they should do, and if they are shown or taught what to do, no one lives according to the words with their deeds. And for this reason, the words seem as dead to them. Therefore, I myself shall show and teach them what they should do and I will fill them with my sweetness.

For worldly things, which are seen and desired now almost by everyone, cannot fill mankind but only arouse his desire and greed of the world to win more and more things. But my words and my love will feed men and fill them with an overflowing consolation. Therefore, my bride, who are my sheep, you must take great care to keep your patience and obedience. You are all mine by right and should therefore follow my will. The one who wants to follow the will of another should have three things: First, he should have the same will and opinion as the other; second, have similar deeds; third, he should move away from his enemies. But who are my enemies if not pride and every sin? You should therefore move away from them, if you desire to follow my will.”

Christ speaks about how faith, hope and love were found perfectly in him at the moment of his death and are found imperfectly in us wretches.

Chapter 39

The Son of God said: “I had three things in my death: First, faith, when I bent my knees and prayed to the Father, knowing that he was able to save me from the suffering. Second, hope, when I steadfastly waited and said: ‘Not as I will.’ Third, love, when I said: ‘Thy will be done.’ I also had bodily agony from the natural fear of suffering when the sweat of blood went out of my body. Thus, in order that my friends should not fear that they are abandoned when the moment of

tribulation comes to them, I showed them in myself that the weak flesh always flees from suffering.

But now you may ask how the sweat of blood went out of my body. Just like the blood of a sick person dries up and is consumed in all his veins, so was my blood consumed by the natural fear of death. My Father wanted to show the way by which Heaven would be opened and the exiled man to be able to enter therein, and therefore he delivered me out of love to my suffering in order that my body would be glorified in honor after the suffering had been fulfilled. For justice did not allow my Manhood to enter into glory without suffering, although I was able to do so by the power of my Divinity.

How then should those deserve to enter into my glory who have little faith, vain hope, and no love? If they believed in the eternal joy of Heaven and in the horrific torments of hell, they would desire nothing but me. If they believed that I see and know all things and have power over all things and that I demand a judgment over all, they would hate the world, and they would fear more to sin before me than before men. If they had a firm and steadfast hope, then their every thought and desire would be directed toward me. If they had a divine love for me, then they would at least think in their soul about what I did for their sake, how much I labored in preaching, how great my pain was in my suffering and how great my love was at my death when I preferred to die rather than to lose and forsake them.

But their faith is sick and wavering, threatening to fall soon, because they believe only when suffering and temptation does not attack them, and they lose their hope as soon as they are met with adversity. Their hope is vain, because they hope that their sin will be forgiven without justice and a right judgment. They hope with self-reliance to receive the kingdom of Heaven for nothing and wish to receive my mercy without the severity of justice. Their love for me is completely cold, for they are never enkindled in seeking or calling me unless they are forced to it by tribulation. How can I be warmed by such people who have neither a right faith nor a firm hope nor a burning love for me?

And therefore, when they cry out to me and say ‘O God, have mercy on me’, they do not deserve to be heard or to enter into my glory since they did not want to follow their Lord in suffering, and, therefore, they should not follow him to the glory. For no knight can please his Lord and be taken back into his mercy after his fall, unless he first humbles himself in penance for his contempt.”

Our Creator asks three questions of his bride. The first is about the servitude of the husband and the dominion of the wife; the second about the work of the husband and the spending of the wife; and the third about the contempt of the Lord and the honoring of the servant.

Chapter 40

“I am your Creator and Lord. Answer me on the three things I am going to ask you. How is the state of the house where the wife is dressed like a lady and her husband like a slave? Is this right? She answered in her conscience: “No Lord, it is not right.” Our Lord said: “I am the Lord of all things and the King of angels. I dressed my servant, namely, my Manhood, with only usefulness and necessity, for I desired nothing from this world except meager food and clothing. But you, who are my bride, want to live like a lady, and wish to have wealth and honor and be held in honor. What is the benefit of all these things? All things are indeed vanity and all things must be left. Mankind was not created for any superfluity but only to have what the necessity of nature requires. This superfluity was invented by pride and it is now held and loved as the law.

Second, tell me if it is right for the man to work from morning to evening and then for the wife to spend everything that has been gathered in a single hour?” She answered: “No, this is not right; the wife is instead obliged to live and act after the will of her man.” Our Lord said: “I acted like the man who works from morning to evening, for from my youth up to the time of my suffering, I worked in showing the way to Heaven by preaching and by fulfilling what I preached with deeds. But the wife, that is, the soul, who should be like

my wife, wastes all my work when she lives frivolously so that nothing of what I have done and suffered for her sake can benefit her; nor do I find any virtue in her in which I can delight in.

Third, tell me, is it not wrong and abominable for the master of the house to be despised and for the slave to be honored?" She answered: "Yes, it indeed is." Our Lord said: "I am the Lord of all things. My house is the world, and mankind should, by right, be my servant. But I, the Lord, am now despised in the world and the man honored. Therefore shall you, whom I have chosen, take care to do my will, because everything in the world is nothing but sea foam and a false dream."

Our beloved Creator's words in the presence of the heavenly host and the bride, in which he complains about five men signifying the pope and his clergy, the evil laity, the Jews and the heathens; and also about the help he sends to his friends, signifying all mankind, and about the harsh judgment he executes on his enemies.

Chapter 41

"I am the Creator of all things. I was born of the Father before Lucifer. I am inseparably in the Father and the Father in me and one Spirit in us both. Accordingly, there is one God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and not three gods. I am the one who promised the eternal inheritance to Abraham and led my people out of Egypt through Moses. I am the one who spoke through the prophets. The Father sent me to the womb of the Virgin without separating himself from me but remaining inseparably with me so that mankind, who had abandoned God, would return to God through my love.

But now, in your presence, my heavenly host, although you see and know all things in me, yet for the sake of the knowledge and teaching of my bride standing here, who cannot understand spiritual things except through a corporal parable, I make a complaint before you over these five men who are standing here, for they provoke me to

wrath in many ways. Just as I, once, in the Law, with the name of Israel, signified the whole Israelite nation, so now by these five men I signify every man in the world.

The first man signifies the leader of the Church and his priests; the second, the evil laity; the third, the Jews; the fourth, the heathens; and the fifth, my friends. But from you, Jew, I exclude all the Jews who are Christians in secret and who serve me secretly in a pure love, a right faith, and a perfect deed. And from you, heathen, I exclude all those who would gladly walk in the way of my commandments, if they only knew and were taught how they should walk and live, and who with their deeds do as much as they know and are able. These shall by no means be judged with you. I now complain over you, o head of my Church, who sit on my seat which I gave to Peter and his successors to sit on with a threefold dignity and power: First, so that they would have the power of binding and loosing souls from their sins. Second, so that they would open Heaven for the penitent. Third, so that that they would close Heaven to the damned and to those who despise my Law. But you, who should be healing souls and presenting them to me, you are in truth a murderer of souls. I appointed Peter as shepherd and guardian of my sheep. But you, however, scatter and wound them. You are worse than Lucifer. For he was envious of me and desired to kill none but me so that he could rule in my place. But you are so much worse, for you do not only kill me by driving me off from yourself by your bad deeds, but you also kill souls by your bad example. I redeemed the souls with my blood and entrusted them to you as to a faithful friend, but you deliver them back again to the enemy from whom I redeemed them. You are more unrighteous than Pilate. He judged no one else but me to death, but you not only judge me as if I were a powerless lord and worthy of no good thing, no, you also judge and condemn the souls of the innocent and let the guilty go free without any rebuke. You are more cruel than Judas who only sold me, but you not only sell me, but also the souls of my chosen men for your own shameful profit and vain name's sake. You are more despicable than the Jews, for they only crucified my body, but you crucify and torture the souls of my chosen men for whom your malice and your sins are more bitter than from any wound from a sword. And so, since you are like Lucifer and more unrighteous than Pilate and

more cruel than Judas and more despicable than the Jews, I complain over you with justice.

To the second man, that is, to the laity, our Lord said: “I created all things for your benefit. You gave your consent to me and I to you. You gave me your faith and promised by oath that you would serve me. But now, you have deserted me like a man who does not know his God. You hold my words for a lie and my deeds as vanity, and you say that my will and my commandments are too heavy. You have violated the faith you promised me. You have broken your oath and abandoned my name. You have separated yourself from the number of my saints and have come to belong to the number of the devils and you have become their friend. You think that no one is worthy of praise and honor but yourself. Everything that belongs to me and that you are bound to do for me appears heavy and bitter for you, but the things that please yourself are very easy for you. Therefore, I complain over you with right, for you have broken the faith you gave me in baptism and later; and for the love I have shown you in word and deed, you mock me and call me a liar, and for my suffering you call me a fool.”

To the third man, that is, to the Jews, he said: “I began my deed of love with you and I chose you as my people. I led you out of slavery, I gave you my Law, I brought you into the land I had promised your fathers, and I sent you prophets to console you. Thereafter, I chose a virgin for myself from among you from which I assumed Manhood. But now I complain over you since you do not want not believe in me, but say: ‘The Christ has not yet come; he is still to be expected.’ ”

Our Lord said to the fourth man, that is, to the heathens: “I created and redeemed you like the Christian man, and I created all good things for your sake. But you are like a man out of his senses, because you do not know what you are doing. You are also like a blind man, because you do not see where you are going. You honor and worship the created things instead of the Creator, and the false instead of the true, and you bend your knee before things that have less worth than yourself. That is why I complain about you.”

To the fifth man, he said: “My friend, come closer!” And he directly said to the heavenly host: “My beloved friends, I have a friend with which I signify and mean many friends. He is like a man trapped among evil people and harshly shackled in captivity. If he speaks the truth, they beat his mouth with stones. If he does something good, they thrust a spear into his breast. Alas, my friends and saints, how long shall I endure such men, and how long shall I tolerate such contempt?”

Saint John the Baptist answered: “You are like the most pure mirror, for we see and know all things in you as in a mirror without any help of words and speech. You are the sweetness that no one can describe in which we taste all good things. You are like the sharpest of swords for you judge in righteousness.”

Our Lord answered him: “Indeed, my friend, you said the truth, for my chosen men see all goodness and righteousness in me, and even the evil spirits see it in their own conscience but not in the light. Just like a man placed in a dark prison, who had earlier learned the letters, knows that which he had learned before even though he is in darkness and currently cannot see, so it is with the devils. Even though they do not see my righteousness in the light of my clarity, they still know and see it in their conscience. I am also like a sword that separates things into two parts. In this way I give each and every person what they deserve.”

Then Our Lord said to Saint Peter: “You are the founder and defender of the faith and of my Church. While my host is listening, state the sentence of the five men!” Peter answered: “O Lord, all praise and honor to you, for the love you have shown to your earth. Blessed be you by all your host, for you allow us to see and know all things in you that have been and will be, and that is why we see and know all things in you. It is true justice that the first man who sits upon your seat, while having the deeds of Lucifer, should shamefully lose the seat he dared to sit on and become a partaker in the torment of Lucifer. The right judgment of the second man is that he, who has fallen away from your faith, should fall down to hell with his head down and feet up, for he loved himself and despised you who should

have been his head. The right judgment of the third man is that he will not see your face and that he should be tormented for his malice and greed, since unbelievers do not deserve to see your glory and beauty. The right judgment of the fourth is that he should be locked up like a man out of his senses and banished to the city of darkness. The right judgment of the fifth is that help should be sent to him.”

Then our Lord answered: “I swear by God the Father, whose voice John the Baptist heard in the Jordan; I swear by the body which John baptized, saw, and touched in the Jordan; I swear by the Holy Spirit who revealed himself in the form of a dove at the Jordan, that I shall do justice with these five men.”

Then our Lord said to the first of these five men: “The sword of my severity will go into your body; it shall enter at the top of your head and penetrate you so deeply and violently that it can never be drawn out. Your chair will sink like a heavy stone and never stop before it comes to the lowest of depths. Your fingers, that is, your assistants and advisers, will burn in the inextinguishable sulfurous fire. Your arms, that is, your office-holders, who should have reached out for the help and benefit of souls but instead reached out for worldly honor and profit, will be judged to the torment and suffering of which David speaks: ‘His sons shall be fatherless and his wife a widow and others shall take his property.’ Who is ‘his wife’ if not the soul which shall be excluded from the glory of Heaven and be widowed and lose God? ‘His sons’, that is, the virtues they appeared to have, and my simple and humble men who were under them, shall be separated from them. Their honor and property will be given to others, and they will inherit eternal shame instead of their dignity and glory. Their headgear will sink down into the filth of hell, and they will never be able to get up out of it. Just as they rose above others through their honor and pride, so in hell they will sink so much deeper than others so that it will be impossible for them to ever stand up again. Their limbs, that is, all the priests who followed and helped them in wickedness, will be cut off from them and severed just like the wall that is torn down where not a single stone is left upon another stone and the cement no longer adheres to the stones. No mercy will come to them, for my love will never warm them nor restore or build

them up into an eternal house in Heaven, but instead they shall be excluded from all good and endlessly tormented with their headmen and leaders.

But to the second I say: Since you do not want to keep the faith you promised me and have love toward me, I shall send an animal to you that will rise from the surging torrent, and it shall swallow you. Like the torrent always flows downward, so this animal will drag you down to the lowest hell, and just like it is impossible for you to travel upstream against the surging torrent, it will be just as hard for you to ever ascend from hell.

To the third I say: Since you, Jew, do not want to believe that I have come, you will see me when I come on judgment day, but not in my glory but in your conscience, and you will come to know that all the things I said were true. Then there is nothing left for you but to be tormented as you deserve.

To the fourth I say: Since you do not care to believe and do not want to know me, your darkness will become light for you, and your heart will be enlightened so that you may know that my judgments are true, but you will still not come to the light.

To the fifth I say: I shall do three things to you. First, I shall fill you inwardly with my fervor. Second, I shall make your mouth harder and firmer than any stone, so that the stones turn back to the ones throwing them at you. Third, I shall arm you with my weapons so well that no spear will harm you but instead everything will melt before you like wax in the heat of the fire. Be therefore made strong and stand like a man. For just like a knight in battle who hopes for help of his lord and continues fighting as long as he still has some life-force in him, so may you too stand firm and fight like a man; for the Lord, your God, whom none are able to withstand, will give you help. And since your number is small, I will honor you and multiply you greatly. Behold, my friends, you see these things and know them in me, and in this way they stand before me.

The words I have now spoken will be fulfilled. But these other men shall never enter my kingdom, as long as I am King, unless they better themselves. For Heaven will only be given to those who humble themselves and to those who mourn over their sins with penance.” Then all the host answered: “Praise be to you, Lord God, who are without beginning and without end.”

The Virgin Mary’s words of advice to the bride about how she should love her Son above all things, and about how every virtue and gift of grace is contained in the glorious Virgin.

Chapter 42

The Mother of God spoke: “I had three things by which I pleased my Son: First, humility in such a way that no created creature, whether angel or man, was more humble than I. Second, I had obedience, for I strove to obey my Son in all things. Third, I had a special charity.

For this reason I am honored threefold by my Son: First, I have been made more honorable than angels and men, so that there is no virtue in God that does not shine in me, even though he is the source and beginning of all virtues and the Creator of all things; but I, however, am the creature to whom he has given more grace than all others. Second, for my obedience I received such power that there is no sinner so unclean that he will not receive forgiveness if he turns to me with a will and purpose of amendment and a contrite heart for his sins. Third, for my charity, God is so close to me that the one who sees God sees me, and the one who sees me can see the Divinity and the Manhood in me and me in God as though in a mirror. For the one who sees God, sees three persons in him, and the one who sees me, sees, as it were, three persons. For the Divinity enclosed me in soul and body in himself and filled me with every virtue, so that there is no virtue in God that does not shine and appear in me, although God himself is the Father and giver of all virtues. For as it is with two bodies joined

together, that whatever one body receives the other body also receives, so God has done with me.

There is no sweetness that is not found in me. It is like someone who has a sweet nut and gives a part of it to another. My soul and body are clearer than the sun and purer than a mirror, and just as three persons would be seen in the mirror if they stood near it, so the Father and Son and Holy Spirit may also be seen in my purity since I once had my Son in my womb with his Divinity. He is now seen in me with his Divinity and Manhood as in a mirror, for I have been glorified with the honor and glory of the resurrection. Therefore may you, my Son's bride, strive to follow my humility and love nothing but my Son."

The words of the Son to his bride about how people may rise up from a small good deed to the highest good and fall down from a small evil to the greatest punishment and torment.

Chapter 43

The Son of God said to his bride: "A great reward sometimes arises from a little good. The date-palm has a wonderful smell, and in its fruit there is a stone. If it is planted in rich soil, it feels well, blossoms and makes good fruit and grows into a great tree. But if it is planted in dry soil, it dries out. Very dry and empty of all goodness is the soil that delights in sin, and it does not become better even if the seed of the virtues is sown in there. But rich is the soil of the mind that understands and confesses its sin and cries over their sin which has provoked their Creator to anger. If the date-stone, that is, if the thought of my severe judgment and power is sown in such a mind, it immediately strikes three roots in the mind.

The first one is that he thinks about how he can do nothing without my help, and for this reason he opens his mouth in prayer to me. The second is that he begins to give some small alms to me for the sake of my honor. The third is that he separates himself from worldly affairs in order to better serve me. He then begins to restrain himself

from superfluities through daily fasting and abstains from and denies his own will and lust, and this is the trunk of the tree.

After this, the branches of love grow when he leads and draws everyone he can toward the good. Then the fruit grows when he also instructs others in goodness as much as he can and with all piety tries to find ways of increasing my honor. Such a fruit is the best one and most pleasing to me. And so, from a small good, man rises up to perfection. When he first takes root through a little piety, the body grows through abstinence, the branches are multiplied through charity and the fruit is increased through preaching.

In the same way, a man falls down from a small evil to the greatest damnation and torment. Do you know what the heaviest burden is for the things that grow? Surely it is the child who is conceived but cannot be born and dies inside the womb of the mother. And because of this the mother also ruptures and dies, and the father carries her and the child to the grave and buries her with the rotting fetus. This is what the devil does to the soul. The iniquitous soul is indeed like the wife of the devil: she follows his will in everything, and she conceives a child with the devil when sin pleases her and she rejoices in it.

For just as a mother conceives a child and bears fruit through the little seed that is nothing but an unclean rottenness, so too, the soul bears much fruit for the devil when she delights in sin. Thereafter, the strength and limbs of the body get formed as sin gets added to sin and increases daily. When the sins increase, the mother swells up and wants to give birth, but cannot, since her nature is consumed in sin, and her life becomes detestable. She would gladly desire to sin even more, but she cannot, and it is not allowed by God.

Then the fear arrives because she cannot fulfill her will, and her strength and joy are gone. Pain and sorrow are everywhere. While she is now despairing of being able to do any good thing or any good deed, her womb ruptures, and she dies while blaspheming and insulting God's judgment and punishment. Then she is dragged by her father, the devil, down to the grave of hell where she is buried for all

eternity with the rot of her sin and the child of her evil lust. Behold how sin increases from a small evil and grows unto damnation.”

The Creator’s words to his bride about how he is now despised and reproached by men who pay no attention to what he did in love for them, when he admonished them through the prophets and suffered for their sake, and about how they do not care about the anger he exercised against the stubborn by punishing them severely.

Chapter 44

“I am the Creator and Lord of all things. I created the world and the world despises me. I hear a voice from the world like that of a bumblebee who gathers honey on the earth. For when a bumblebee is flying and begins to land on the ground, it emits a very raspy voice. I now hear this raspy and ignorant voice in the world, saying: ‘I do not care what comes after this.’ In truth, now everyone is shouting: ‘I do not care what comes after this and may I have my own will!’

Indeed, mankind does not care about what I did for the sake of love by preaching and suffering for them and by admonishing them through the prophets, and they do not care about what I did in my anger by executing my vengeance upon the evil and disobedient. They see that they are mortal and that death can strike them unexpectedly, but they do not care. They hear and see my justice which I exercised on Pharaoh and on Sodom for the sake of sin, and how I execute vengeance on other kings and rulers, and how I daily allow it to happen through the sword and other afflictions, but it is as if they were blind to all these things.

And for this reason they fly like bumblebees wherever they desire, and sometimes they fly as if they were jumping and running, for they exalt themselves in their pride, but they come down quickly by returning to their lust and gluttony. They also gather sweetness for themselves from the earth, for man works and gathers for the needs of the body and not for the soul, and for worldly honor but not the

eternal. They transform the temporal things into a suffering for themselves, and what is useless, into eternal torment. But, for the sake of the prayers of my Mother, I will send my clear voice to these bumblebees, from which my friends are excluded (for they are in the world only in body), and it shall preach mercy. If they will listen to it, they will be saved.

The answer of the Virgin Mother and the angels, the prophets, the apostles, and the devils to God, in the presence of the bride, testifying about his many virtues and his perfection in creation, incarnation and redemption, and about how evil men nowadays contradict all these things, and about the severe judgment they receive.

Chapter 45

The Mother of God said: “Bride of my Son, clothe yourself and stand firm, for my Son is approaching you. His flesh was pressed as in a winepress. For since mankind sinned in all limbs, my Son made atonement in all his limbs. His hair was pulled out, his sinews extended, his joints were dislocated, his bones mangled, and his hands and feet were pierced through. His mind was saddened, his heart afflicted by sorrow, his intestines was forced in toward his back, for mankind had sinned in all limbs.”

Then the Son spoke, while the heavenly host was present, and he said: “Although you know all things in me, still I speak for the sake of my bride standing here. I ask you, angels: What is it that was without beginning and shall be without end? And what is it that created everything and was created by none? Proclaim it and give your testimony!” All the angels answered as with one voice and said: “Lord, it is you. We give testimony to you about three things: First, that you are our Creator and that you created all things in Heaven and on earth. Second, that you are without beginning and will be without end, and your kingdom and power will stand for all eternity. Without you nothing has been created and without you nothing can be created. Third, we testify that we see all justice in you and all the things that

have been and will be, and all things are present to you without beginning or end.”

Then he said to the prophets and patriarchs: “I ask you: Who brought you out of slavery into freedom? Who divided the waters for you? Who gave you the Law? Who gave you the prophetic spirit to speak about future things?” They answered him, saying: “You, Lord. You brought us out of slavery. You gave us the Law. You moved our spirit to speak and prophesy about future things.”

Then he said to his Mother: “Give true testimony about what you know of me.” She answered: “Before the angel, whom you sent, came to me, I was alone in soul and body. But after the angel’s words, your body was within me with Divinity and Manhood, and I felt your body in my body. I bore you without pain and suffering. I gave birth to you without anguish and travail. I wrapped you in poor clothes and I fed you with my milk. I was with you from your birth until your death.”

Thereafter he said to the apostles: “Say who it was that you saw, heard, and touched?” They answered: “We heard your words and wrote them down. We heard and saw the great works that you did when you gave us the New Law. You commanded the demons with one word to leave humans and they obeyed you and went out, and with your word you raised the dead and healed the sick. We saw you in a human body. We saw your great power and divine glory with your human nature. We saw you handed over to your enemies and we saw you hanging on the cross. We saw you suffer the most bitter pain and we saw you be laid in the grave. We touched you when you were raised from the dead. We touched your hair and your face. We touched the place of your wounds and your limbs. You ate with us and you gave us your eloquence. You are truly the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. We also observed when you ascended with your Manhood to the right hand of the Father where you now are and will be without end.”

Then God said to the unclean demon spirits: “Although you hide the truth in your conscience, still I now command you to say the truth about who it was that reduced your power.” They answered him: “Just

like thieves do not tell the truth unless their feet are pressed in the hard wood, so we do not speak the truth unless we are forced by your divine and formidable power. You are the one who, with your power, descended into hell. You reduced our power in the world. You took out from hell what was yours by right, namely, your friends.”

Then our Lord said: “Behold, all those who have a spirit and are not clothed in a body, bear witness to the truth for me. But those who have a spirit and a body, namely humans, contradict me. Some know the truth of me but do not care about it. Others do not know it and, therefore, they do not care about it but say it is all false.” He again said to the angels: “They say that your witness is false, that I am not the Creator of all things and that all things are not known in me. Therefore, they love the created things more than me, who am the Creator.” He said to the prophets: “They contradict you and say that the Law is useless, that you can be saved through your own power and wisdom, that the spirit was false and that you spoke according to your own will.” He said to his Mother: “Some say that you are not a Virgin and others, that I did not take a body from you. Others know it but do not care about it.” He said to the apostles: “They contradict you, for they say that you are liars and that the New Law is irrational and useless. Others believe it to be true but do not care about it. I ask you now: Who will be their judge?”

They all answered him, saying: “You, God, who are without beginning and without end. You, Jesus Christ, who are with the Father, to you is all judgment given by the Father; you are their judge.” Our Lord answered: “I who grieved for them am now their judge. But even though I know and can do all things, still, give me your judgment over them.”

They answered him: “Just as the whole world perished once at the beginning of the world in Noah’s flood, so too now the world deserves to perish by fire, since the wickedness and injustice are much greater now than what it was then.”

Then our Lord answered: “Since I am just and merciful, I shall make no judgment without mercy nor mercy without justice, and

therefore, I will once more send my mercy to the world for the sake of the prayers of my Mother and my saints. But if they do not want to listen, the most severe and harsh justice will follow and come to them.”

The words of praise of the Mother and the Son to each other in the presence of the bride, and about how Christ is now regarded as shameful, dishonest, and despicable by people, and about the horrifying and eternal damnation of these people.

Chapter 46

The Queen of Heaven spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be you my God, who are without beginning and without end. You had the most noble and beautiful body. You were the most brave and virtuous man. You are the most worthy creature.”

The Son answered: “The words proceeding from your mouth are sweet to me and delight my inmost heart like the sweetest drink. You are more sweet to me than any other creature in existence. For just as different faces can be seen in a mirror by a person but none pleases him more than his own, so too, even though I love my saints, I love you with a special love, because I was born from your blessed flesh. You are like myrrh whose fragrance ascended up to the Divinity and led the Divinity to your body. This same fragrance drew your body and soul up to God, where you now are with soul and body. Blessed be you, for the angels rejoice in your beauty and all are saved by your virtue and power when they call on you with a sincere heart. All the demons tremble in your light and do not dare to stay in your splendor, for they always want to be in darkness.

You gave praise to me for a threefold reason, for you said that I had the most noble body; second, that I was the most brave man; and third, you said that I was the most worthy creature. These three things are only contradicted by those who have a body and soul, that is, human beings. They say that I have a shameful body and that I am the

most despicable man and the lowliest of creatures. For what is more shameful than to tempt others to sin? For they claim that my body tempts to sin when they say that sin is not as abominable or displeasing to God as much as is said. They say that nothing exists unless God wants it to be so and that nothing is created but by him. ‘Why should we not use the created things to our benefit? Our natural frailty demands it and this is how everyone has lived before us and still do live.’ This is how people now speak about me and my Manhood, in which I, the true God, appeared among men. For I advised them to abstain from sinning and showed what a serious and grave matter it is, and this they say was shameful, as if I had advised them to do something useless and shameful. They say that nothing is honorable but sin and that which pleases their will.

They also say that I am the most shameful man. For what is more shameful than someone who, when he speaks the truth, gets his mouth beaten with stones and gets hit in the face and, on top of that, hears people insulting him, saying: ‘If he were a man, he would revenge himself over such an injustice.’ This is what they do to me. I speak to them through the learned fathers and Holy Scripture, but they say that I lie. They beat my mouth with stones and their fists when they commit adultery, murder, and lying, saying: ‘If he were manly, if he were the almighty God, he would revenge himself for such sins and transgressions.’ But I endure this with patience, and everyday I hear them saying that the torment is neither eternal nor as severe and bitter as it is said, and my words are judged and said to be lies.

Third, they judge me to be the most ugly and worthless creature. For what is more worthless in the house than a dog or a cat that someone would be glad to exchange for a horse, if he could? But mankind holds me to be of less worth than a dog, for he would not wish to take me if it meant that he would lose the dog, and he would reject and deny me before losing the dog’s hide. What is the thing that pleases the mind so little that one does not think of it and desires it more fervently than me? For if they regarded me more worthy than any other created creature, they would love me more than other things. But now they have nothing so small that they do not love it more than me. They grieve over everything but me. They grieve for their own

and their friends' losses. They grieve for an injurious word. They grieve over offending or hurting people more highly placed and powerful than they, but they do not grieve about offending or hurting me, who am the Creator of all things. What man is so despicable that he is not listened to if he begs about something and is not given a gift in return if he has given something? But I am utterly vile and despicable in their eyes, for they do not consider me worthy of any good, even though I have given them all good things.

But you, my most dear Mother, have tasted more of my wisdom than others, and never has anything but the truth ever left your mouth, just as nothing but the truth has ever left my own mouth. I will now justify myself in the sight of all the saints. First, against him, who said that I had a shameful body. I shall prove that I indeed have the most noble body without deformity or sin, and he shall fall into eternal shame and reproach which all will see. To the one who said that my words were a lie and that he did not know if I was God or not, I shall prove that I truly am God, and he will flow down like mud to hell. But the third, who regarded me as useless, I shall judge to eternal damnation so that he will never see my glory and my joy.”

Thereafter he said to his bride: “Stand firm in my service. You have come to a wall, as it were, in which you are enclosed, so that you cannot flee nor dig through its foundations. Endure this small tribulation willingly, and you will experience eternal rest in my arms. You know the will of the Father, you hear the words of the Son, you feel my Spirit, and you have delight and consolation in the conversation with my Mother and my saints. Therefore, stand firm, or else you will come to feel my justice by which you will be forced to do what I am now kindly urging you to do.”

Our Lord's words to his bride about the contempt of the New Law, and about how that same Law is now rejected and despised by the world, and about how bad priests are not God's priests but God's betrayers, and about the punishment and damnation they receive.

Chapter 47

“I am the God who in ancient days was called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I am the God who gave the Law to Moses. This law was like clothing. For as a mother with her child in the womb prepares her infant’s clothing, so too I, God, prepared the New Law, for the Old Law was nothing but the clothing and shadow and sign of future things to come. I clothed and wrapped myself in the clothing of this Law. And then when a boy grows up somewhat, his old clothes are laid down and new clothes are taken up. In this way, I fulfilled the Old Law when I put aside the used clothing of the Old Law, and assumed the new clothing, that is, the New Law, and I gave this clothing and myself to everyone who wanted to have it. This clothing is not very tight nor difficult to wear but is well suited everywhere. For my Law does not order people to fast or work too much nor to kill themselves or to do anything beyond the limits of possibility, but it is beneficial for the soul and conducive to the restraining, mortification, and chastisement of the body. For when the body gets too attached to sin, then sin consumes the body.

Two things are found in the New Law: First, a prudent temperance in soul and body and the right use of all things. Second, a readiness for heeding and keeping the Law; for the person who cannot endure to stay in one thing can stand in another. Hereby follows that a person who cannot endure to be a virgin can live in an honorable marriage, and he who falls into sin may get up again and better himself.

But this Law is now rejected and despised by the world. For they say that the Law is narrow, heavy, and ugly. They say it is narrow, for the Law orders one to be satisfied with the necessary and to flee the superfluous. But they want to have all things without reason like senseless cattle and above the necessity of the body, and that is why the Law is too narrow for them. Second, they say it is heavy, because the Law says that one should have enjoyment with reasonable temperance and at established times. But they want to fulfill their lust more than what is good and more than what is established. Third, they

say it is unsightly, because the Law bids them to love humility and to accredit every good to God. But they want to be proud and exalt themselves for the good things that God has given them, and that is why the Law seems ugly and vain to them.

See how despised and maltreated my clothes are. I fulfilled everything in the Old Law before I began the New Law. For the Old Law was too difficult, and my intention was that the New Law should remain until I came in judgment. But they shamefully threw away the clothing with which I covered the soul, that is, the right faith. And above this, they add sin to sin, since they also want to betray me. Does not David say in the psalm: ‘He who ate my bread thought treason against me’? In these words I want you to note two things. First, he does not say “thinks” but “thought”, as if it had already happened. Second, he denotes one man as a betrayer. But I say that it is those who are now present who betray me, not those who have been or who will come, but those who are now alive. I also say that it is not only one man but many.

But now you may ask me: ‘Are there not two kinds of bread, one invisible and spiritual, of which angels and saints live, and the other earthly, by which men are fed? But angels and saints do not want anything other than that which is according to your will, and men can do nothing other than that which pleases you. How, then, can they betray you?’

I will answer you in the presence of my heavenly host who knows and sees all things in me, but I say this for your sake so that you may understand: There are indeed two kinds of bread. One is that of the angels who eat my bread in my kingdom so that they may be filled with my indescribable joy. They do not betray me, since they want nothing other than what I want. But those who betray me are the ones who eat my bread at the altar. I truly am that bread. This bread has three characteristics: form, flavor, and roundness. I am indeed the Bread. And, like the bread, I have three things in me: flavor, form, and roundness. I have flavor, for just as all food is tasteless without bread and gives no strength, so without me, everything that exists is tasteless, powerless, and vain. I have also the form of the bread, since

I am of the earth. I was born of the Virgin Mother, and my Mother is of Adam, and Adam is of the earth. I have also roundness wherein there is no end or beginning, since I am without beginning and without end. And no one is able to see or find an end or beginning in my wisdom, power, or charity. I am in all things, over all things, and outside of all things. Even if someone were to fly like the fastest arrow perpetually without end, he would still never find an end or a limit to my power and virtue on account of these three things: namely, flavor, form, and roundness. I am that bread that is seen and touched on the altar and is transformed into my body that was crucified. For just as a dry and easily inflammable piece of wood is quickly consumed if it is placed on the fire, and nothing remains of the wood but all of it is fire, so when these words are said, 'This is my body,' that which before was bread instantly becomes my body, but is not inflamed by fire like wood but by my Divinity.

That is why those who eat my bread betray me. What murder could be more unmanly and abhorrent than when someone kills himself? And what betrayal is worse than when two are joined by an indissoluble bond, and one betrays the other, as is the case of married people? But what does the man do in order to betray his wife? Indeed, he insincerely says to her: 'Let us go to such and such a place so I can fulfill my will with you.' She goes with him in true simplicity, ready for her husband's every wish. But when he finds the proper time and place, he brings against her three means of betrayal: Either something so heavy that it kills her with one blow, or something so sharp that it cuts right through her intestines, or something to smother the spirit of life in her directly. Then, when she is dead, the betrayer thinks to himself: 'Now I have done wrong. If my crime becomes known publicly, I will be judged to death.' Therefore, he goes and lays his dead wife's body in some hidden place, so that his sin may not be revealed.

This is what the priests who are my betrayers do to me. For they and I are joined together by a single bond when they take the bread and pronounce the words that change it into my true body, which I assumed from the Virgin. No angel could do this, for I gave this dignity to priests alone and elected them for the highest office. But

now they act towards me like betrayers, for they show me a happy and kind face and lead me to a hidden place to betray me. These priests show me a happy face when they appear to be good and simple, and they treacherously lead me to a hidden place when they approach the altar. There I am ready like a bride or bridegroom to do all of their will, but they betray me.

First they lay something heavy over me when the divine office, which they say for me, is heavy and burdensome to them. They would rather speak a hundred words for the honor of the world than one for my honor. They would rather give a hundred coins of gold for the glory of the world than one penny for my sake. They would rather work a hundred times for their own benefit and that of the world than once for my honor. They press me down with this heavy burden, so that it is as though I am dead in their hearts. Second, they pierce me with a sharp blade that penetrates the intestines whenever the priest goes to the altar with the knowledge that he has sinned and repented, but yet is firmly resolved to sin again when his office is done, thinking thus to himself: 'I truly repent of my sin, but I will not give up the woman with whom I have sinned so that I may not be able to sin any longer with her.' These priests pierce me with the sharpest blade. Third, they smother the spirit when they think inwardly to themselves in this way: 'It is good and delightful to be with the world and good to live in lust and I cannot restrain myself. I will do my will in my youth; when I grow old, I will become restrained and better myself.' And by this wretched thought the spirit of life is smothered.

But now you may ask how their hearts becomes so cold and tepid toward me and everything good so that they can never be warmed or rise again to my love. Just as ice cannot catch fire even if it is laid on the fire, but only melts into water, so too, even if I give them my grace and they hear my words of admonishment, they cannot rise up to the warmth of life, but wither and fade away from everything good.

See how they betray me in that they show themselves to be simple without being so, and are burdened and depressed of my honor, which they instead should delight and rejoice in, and also in that their will is to sin and to continue in sin until the end. They conceal me and place

me in a hidden place, when they think to themselves: 'I know I have sinned greatly, but if I refrain from my office, everyone will reproach and condemn me as evil.' And so they shamelessly go up to the altar and place me before them and touch me, who am true God and true man. I am as it were in a hidden place with them, since no one knows or sees how evil and abominable they are. I, true God and man, lie there as in a hidden place, for even if the worst priest said the words "This is my body," he still consecrates my true body, and I, true God and true man, would lie there before him. But when he puts my body to his mouth, then I am no longer present to him through the grace of my Divinity and Manhood; only the form and flavor of bread remain for him, but not because I am not truly present for the evil as with the good due to the office of the sacrament, but because the evil and good do not gain the same benefit or perfection from my body. Behold how these priests are not my priests but true betrayers, since they sell and betray me like Judas. I observe the pagans and the Jews, but I do not see anyone worse than these priests, for they are in the same sin that made Lucifer fall from Heaven.

But now I will also tell you their judgment and whom they are like. Their judgment is damnation. David condemned those who were disobedient to God, and because he was a righteous prophet and king, he did not condemn out of wrath or bad will or impatience, but out of divine justice. So do I too, who am better than David, condemn those who are now priests, not out of wrath or bad will but out of justice.

Accursed be therefore everything of what they take from the earth for their own benefit, for they do not praise their God and Creator who has given them this. Accursed be their food and drink that enters their mouths and nourishes their bodies to become food for worms and destines their souls for hell. Accursed be their bodies that will rise again in hell to suffer and burn for all eternity. Accursed be the years in which they lived uselessly. Accursed be the moment that begins hell for them and that never will end. Accursed be their eyes with which they saw the light of Heaven. Accursed be their ears with which they heard my words and did not care. Accursed be their taste with which they tasted my gifts. Accursed be their touch with which they touched

me. Accursed be their smell with which they smelled the delightful things of the world and forgot me, the most delightful of all.

But now you may ask: How will they be accursed spiritually? Well, their sight will be accursed, because they shall not see the vision of God in himself but only the darkness and sufferings of hell. Their ears will be accursed, because they shall not hear my words but only the screams and horrors of hell. Their taste will be accursed, because they shall not taste my eternal goods and joy but only eternal bitterness. Their touch will be accursed, because they shall not touch me but only eternal fire in hell. Their smell will be accursed, because they shall not smell the sweet smell of my kingdom that surpasses all sweet scents, but only have the foul stench of hell which is more bitter than bile and worse than sulfur. They shall be accursed by Heaven and earth and all brute creatures, for these obey God and glorify him, whereas they reject him.

Therefore, I who am the Truth, swear in my truth, that if they die like this and in such a disposition that they are in now, neither my love nor my virtue will ever encompass them, but instead, they will be damned for all eternity, and not only priests, but also everyone who rejects the commandments of God!

About how, in the presence of the heavenly host and of the bride, the Divinity spoke to the Manhood against the Christians, just as God spoke to Moses against the people of Israel, and about how damned priests love the world and despise Christ, and about their condemnation and damnation.

Chapter 48

A great host was seen in Heaven and God said to it: “My friends, who know and understand and see all things in me, I am speaking in your presence, for the sake of my bride standing here, like someone who speaks to himself, for in this way does my Divinity converse with my Humanity. Moses was with God on the mountain forty days and nights, and when the people saw that he had been gone so long, they

took gold and threw it into the fire and shaped a calf out of it, calling it their god.

Then God said to Moses: 'The people have sinned. I will wipe them out, just like something written is erased from a book.' Moses answered: 'No, my Lord, do not. Remember that you led them up from the Red Sea and worked wonders for them. If you erase and destroy them, where is your promise then? I beg you, do not do this, for then your enemies will say: The God of Israel is evil who led the people up from the sea but killed them in the desert.' And God was appeased by these words.

I am this Moses, figuratively speaking. My Divinity speaks to my Manhood just as to Moses, saying: 'Behold what your people have done and see how they have despised me. All the Christians shall be killed and their faith eradicated.' My Humanity answers: 'No, Lord. Remember that I led the people through the sea in my blood when I was bruised from the top of my head to the sole of my foot. I have promised them eternal life; have mercy on them for the sake of my suffering.' After hearing these words the Divinity was appeased and said: 'Thy will be done, for all judgment is given to you.' See what love, my friends!

But now in your presence, my spiritual friends, angels and saints, and in the presence of my bodily friends who are in the world and yet not in the world except with their body, I complain that my people are gathering firewood and lighting a fire, throwing gold into the fire so that a calf emerges for them to adore and worship as a god. It stands like a calf on four feet having a head, a throat, and a tail. When Moses delayed on the mountain a long time without returning, the people said: 'We do not know what may have happened to him after this long time.' And they were displeased that he had led them out of captivity and slavery, and they said: 'Let us find another god to go before us.'

This is what these damned priests are now doing to me. For they say: 'Why should we have a more austere life than others? What is our reward for this? It is better for us to live in peace and as we want. Let us love the world that we are certain about, for we are uncertain about

his promise.’ Then they gather firewood when they devote all their senses to the love of the world. They light a fire when they have a complete desire for the world. They burn when their lust glows in their mind and proceeds in an act. They throw in gold, which means that all the honor and love they should show to me, they show to get the honor of the world.

Then the calf emerges, which means a complete love of the world. It has four feet of sloth, impatience, superfluous rejoicing, and greediness. For these priests who should be my servants are slothful in honoring me, impatient in suffering anything for my sake, excessive in rejoicing, and never satisfied with the things they have. This calf also has a head and throat, which means a complete will for gluttony that can never be satisfied, not even if the whole sea were to flow into it. The tail of the calf is their malice, for they do not let anyone keep his property if they can take it from him. By their bad example and their contempt, they injure and pervert everyone who serves me. Such is the love for the calf that is in their hearts, and in such they rejoice and lust. They think about me as those others did about Moses, and say: ‘He has been gone for a long time. His words appear vain and his deeds burdensome. Let us have our own will, let our power and will be our god.’ And they are not even satisfied by these things and forget me entirely, but instead, they have me as their idol.

The heathens used to worship wood and stones and dead men, and among others, an idol called Beelzebub was worshipped whose priests used to offer him incense with devotional genuflections and shouts of praise. And everything in their offering that was useless, they dropped on the ground, and the birds and flies ate it up. But everything that was useful, the priests hid away for themselves. They locked the door on their idol and kept the key for themselves so that nobody could go in.

This is what the priests are doing to me in this time. They offer me incense, that is, they speak and preach beautiful words in order to win praise for themselves and some temporal benefit, but not out of love of me. Just as the scent of the incense cannot be captured but only felt and seen, so their words do not attain any benefit for souls so

that it can take root and be kept in their hearts, but they are only heard and seem to please for a short time. They offer me prayers, but not the kind that are pleasing to me. Like those who shout praise with their mouths and are silent in their hearts, they stand next to me shouting with their mouths while in their hearts and thoughts they wander around in the world. But if they were speaking with a mighty or powerful man, then their hearts would follow their own speech and words so that no one would be able to remark on them.

But in my presence the priests are like men who are mentally deranged, for they say one thing with their mouths and have another in their hearts. No one who hears their words can be certain about their meaning. They bend their knees for me, that is, they promise me humility and obedience, but in truth, their humility is as Lucifer's, and they are obedient to their own desires and not me. They also lock me in constantly and keep the key for themselves. They open up for me and praise me when they say: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' But then they lock me in again by fulfilling their own will, while my will is as an imprisoned and powerless man who can neither be seen nor heard. They keep the key for themselves when they, by their bad example, also lead astray others who want to do my will. And, if they could, they would gladly forbid my will from being fulfilled and accomplished, except when it suits their own will. They also hide anything in the offering that is necessary and useful to them, that is, they demand all their honor and privileges, but the human body, who falls to the ground and dies and for which they should offer the best sacrifice, him they consider as useless and leave the body to the flies, that is, to the worms on the ground. They do not care or bother about their obligation for the salvation of souls.

But what was said to Moses? 'Kill those who made this idol!' And some were killed, but not all. In the same way, my words will now come and kill them, some in body and soul by eternal damnation, others unto life so that they should convert and live, others through a fast death, for these priests are altogether abhorrent to me. But what shall I liken them to? They are indeed like the fruit of the thorn-bush, which is beautiful and red on the outside, but inside is full of impurity and stinging thorns. In the same way, these come to me as men who

are red with love, and they seem to be pure to men, but inside they are full of all filth. If this fruit is laid in the earth, other thorn-bushes grow up from it. In the same way, these hide their sin and malice in their heart as in the earth, and they become so rooted in evil that they do not even blush to appear in public and boast about their sin. Hence other men not only find a reason to sin but also become deeply wounded in their souls, thinking thus to themselves: ‘If priests do this, it is even more permitted for us to do it.’ And they are not only like the fruit of the thorn-bush, but also the thorns, for they disdain to be moved by reproach and admonition, and they consider no one to be as wise as them and think that they can do everything they want.

Therefore, I swear by my Divinity and Manhood, in the hearing of all the angels, that I shall break down the door they have closed on my will, and my will shall be fulfilled, and their will shall be annihilated and locked in eternal torment and anguish. For as it was once said: ‘I shall begin my judgment with the priests and at my altar.’”

The words of Christ to his bride about how Christ is likened to Moses, in a figurative way, leading the people out of Egypt; and about how the damnable priests, whom he chose in the place of the prophets as his most beloved friends, now cry: “Depart from us!”

Chapter 49

The Son of God spoke: “Earlier, I likened myself to Moses in a figurative way. When he led the people out, the water stood like a wall to the right and to the left. I am in truth this Moses, figuratively speaking, who led my Christian people out, that is, I opened heaven for them and showed them the way. But now I have chosen other friends for myself more loved and intimate than the prophets, namely, my priests, who not only hear my words and see, when they see me myself, but also touch me with their hands, which none of the prophets or angels could do.

These priests, whom I have chosen in place of the prophets as my friends, cry out to me, but not with such desire and love as the prophets did, no, the priests and the prophets cry out with two opposing voices. For the priests do not cry out as the prophets did: ‘Come, Lord, for you are sweet,’ but they cry out: ‘Depart from us, for your words are bitter and your deeds heavy and they make us ashamed!’ Hear what these accursed priests say! I stand before them like the most meek and gentle sheep from which they get wool for their clothing and milk for their food, and yet they despise me for such a great love. I stand before them like a guest saying: ‘Friend, give me the necessities of life for my body, for I need it, and you will receive the greatest reward from God in return!’

But even though I appeared with the simplicity of a sheep, they drive me away as a wolf lying in wait for the master’s sheep. They do not want to show me any hospitality and refuse to take me into their house, but instead, they affront me like a traitor unworthy of receiving hospitality from them. But what will the guest do when he has been rejected? Should he not bring out arms against the master of the house who drove him away? By no means, for this would not be just since the owner can deny or give his belongings to whomever he wants. But what shall then the guest do? He should indeed say to the one who drove him away: ‘My friend, since you do not want to take me into your house, I will go to another who will show mercy to me.’ And when he comes to another, he hears him saying: ‘You are welcome, my Lord, all that I have is yours. You shall now be the Lord, and I want to be your servant and guest.’ Those are the kind of lodgings I am pleased to stay in, where I hear such a voice.

I am indeed like a guest driven away by men. But even though I can enter any place by my power, still, on account of justice I do not, but I only enter to those who receive me with a good will as their true Lord, not as a guest, and entrust all their will into my hands.”

The Mother and Son’s words of blessing and praise for each other, and about the grace granted by the Son to his Mother for the souls in purgatory and those in this world.

Chapter 50

The Mother of God spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be your name, my Son, without end and blessed be your Divinity that is without beginning and without end! In your Divinity there are three wonderful things: namely, power, wisdom, and virtue. Your power is like the most violently burning fire before which everything that is solid and strong is reckoned as dry straw in a fire. Your wisdom is like the ocean that can never be emptied because of its greatness and vastness, and which, when it rises up and flows over, covers valleys and mountains. Neither can your wisdom be comprehended nor fathomed about how wisely you created mankind and placed him over all your creation. How wisely you arranged the birds in the air, the animals on the earth and the fishes in the sea, giving to each one its own time and order. How marvelously you give life to everything and take it away! How wisely you give wisdom to the unwise and take it away from the proud! Your virtue is like the light of the sun which shines in the sky and fills the earth with its light. Likewise, your virtue satisfies high and low and fills all things. Therefore, blessed be you, my Son, for you are my God and my Lord!”

The Son answered: “My most dear Mother, your words are sweet to me, for they come from your soul. You are like the dawn that breaks forth with clarity. You outshine all the heavens and your light and your clarity surpass all the angels. By your clarity, you drew to yourself the true sun, that is, my Divinity, so much so that the sun of my Divinity came to you and settled on you. By his warmth you are warmed in my love over all others and by his splendor you are enlightened in my wisdom more than all others. The darkness of the earth was chased away and all the heavens were enlightened through you. I say in my truth that your purity pleased me more than all the angels, and it drew my Divinity to you so that you were enkindled by the warmth of my Spirit; and through it you enclosed the true God and Man in your womb whereby mankind has been enlightened and the angels made joyful. Therefore, may you be blessed by your blessed Son! And for this reason, no prayer of yours will ever come to me without being

heard, and through you, anyone who prays for mercy with the intention of mending their sinful ways will receive grace for your sake. For just as heat comes from the sun, so too all mercy is given through you. You are like a filled and flowing spring from which mercy flows to the help of the wretched.”

The Mother answered the Son: “All virtue and glory be yours, my Son! You are my God and my mercy; all good that I have comes from you. You are like the seed that was never sown but still grew and gave fruit a hundredfold and a thousandfold. For all mercy comes from you and since it is innumerable and ineffable, it can indeed be signified by the number one hundred, which signifies perfection, for all perfection comes from you and everyone is perfected in virtue by you.”

The Son answered the Mother: “Indeed, my Mother, you likened me rightly to the seed that was never sown but still grew, since I came with my Divinity to you, and my Manhood was not sown by intercourse but still grew in you, and from it mercy flowed out from you to all. Therefore, you have spoken rightly. Since you now draw mercy out of me with the most sweet words of your mouth, ask me what you want, and it shall be given to you.”

The Mother answered: “My Son, since I have won mercy from you, I beg for mercy and help for the wretched. For there are namely four places: The first is Heaven, where the angels and the souls of the saints need nothing but you whom they have - for in you they have every good. The second place is hell, and those who stay there are filled with malice and excluded from all mercy. Therefore, nothing good can enter into them any more. The third is the place of those being purged in purgatory, and those who stay there need a threefold mercy since they are tormented in a threefold way. They suffer through their hearing, for they hear nothing but pain, sorrow, and misery. They suffer through their sight, for they see nothing but their own misery. They are tormented through their touch, for they feel the heat of the unbearable fire and of the harsh torment. My Lord and my Son, give them your mercy for the sake of my prayers!”

The Son answered: “I will gladly give them a threefold mercy for your sake. First, their hearing shall be relieved, their sight will be eased, and their torment will be reduced and relieved. And all those who are in the greatest and most severe torment of the fires of purgatory shall from this moment come to the middle torment; those who are in the middle torment shall come to the lightest; and those who are in the lightest torment shall come home to rest.”

The Mother answered: “Praise and honor to you, my Lord!” And she immediately said to her Son: “My beloved Son, the fourth place is the world, and its inhabitants are in need of three things: First, repentance for their sins. Second, penance and atonement. Third, the strength to do good deeds.”

The Son answered: “Everyone who calls on your name and has hope in you along with a purpose of amendment for his sins shall be given these three things as well as the kingdom of Heaven. Your words are so sweet to me that I cannot deny you anything you plead for, for you want nothing other than what I want. You are indeed like a shining and burning flame by which the extinguished lights are enkindled and the burning lights are strengthened, for by your love which arose in my heart and drew me to you, those who are dead in sin will come to life again and those who are tepid and black like smoke will become strong in my love.”

The Mother blesses the Son in the hearing of the bride, and about how the glorious Son makes a wonderful comparison of his most sweet Mother to a flower that grew in a valley but rose up over mountains.

Chapter 51

The Mother of God spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be your name, my Son Jesus Christ, and all honor to your Manhood above all that is created! Glory to your Divinity above all good things, which are one God with your Manhood!” The Son answered: “My Mother, you are like a flower that grew in a valley. Around the valley there

were five high mountains, and the flower grew out of three roots with a straight stem without any knots. This flower had five leaves that were filled with all sweetness. The valley with its flower grew above these five mountains, and the leaves of the flower spread themselves above every height of heaven and above all the choirs of angels. My beloved Mother, you are this valley for the sake of the great humility you had in comparison with all others. Your humility grew higher than five mountains.

The first mountain was Moses because of his power. For he had power over my people through the Law, as if it were enclosed in his hand. But you enclosed the Lord of all law in your womb and, therefore, you are higher than this mountain. The second mountain was Elijah, who was so holy, that he with soul and body, was assumed into my holy place. But your soul, my most dear Mother, was assumed above all the choirs of angels to the throne of God along with your most pure body. You are therefore higher than Elijah. The third mountain was the strength of Samson that surpassed all other men. Yet the devil defeated him with his treachery. But you defeated the devil with your strength and power. You are therefore stronger than Samson. The fourth mountain was David, who was a man according to my heart and will, but yet fell into sin. But you, my beloved Mother, followed my will in all and never sinned. The fifth mountain was Solomon, who was full of wisdom but nevertheless was fooled. But you, my Mother, were full of all wisdom and were never fooled or deceived. You are therefore higher than Solomon.

The flower grew from three roots, because of the three things you had from your youth: obedience, charity, and divine understanding. Out of these three roots grew the most straight stem without any knots, which means that your will was never bent to anything but my will. This flower also had five leaves that grew above all the choirs of angels. My dear Mother, you are indeed the flower with these five leaves.

The first leaf is your nobleness, which is so great that my angels, who are noble before me, when seeing and considering your nobleness, saw that it was above them and more eminent than their

holiness and nobleness. You are therefore higher than the angels. The second leaf is your mercy, which was so great that you, when you saw the misery of all the souls, had compassion over them and suffered the greatest torment at my death. The angels are full of mercy, and yet they never endure sorrow or pain, but you, my loving Mother, were merciful to the wretched when you felt all the sorrow and torment of my death, and you wanted to suffer torment for the sake of mercy rather than being separated from it. Therefore, your mercy surpassed the mercy of all the angels. The third leaf is your loving kindness. The angels are loving and kind and want good for everyone, but you, my dearest Mother, had before your death a will like an angel in your soul and body and did good to everyone. And still you do not refuse anyone who reasonably prays for his own good. Therefore, your kindness is higher and greater than the angels. The fourth leaf is your beauty. The angels behold the beauty of each other and wonder over the beauty of all souls and all bodies, but they see that the beauty of your soul is above all that is created and that the nobleness of your body surpasses all created beings. And so, your beauty surpassed all the angels and everything created. The fifth leaf was your divine joy, for nothing pleased you but God, just as nothing but God delights the angels. Each and every one of them knows and knew his own joy in himself, but when they saw the joy in you to God, they beheld in their conscience how their joy flamed up in them like a light in the love of God. They saw that your joy was like a flaming bonfire, burning with the hottest fire, with flames so high that it came near to my Divinity. And for this reason, my most sweet Mother, your divine joy burned well above all the choirs of angels. Since this flower had these five leaves, namely, nobleness, mercy, loving kindness, beauty, and the highest joy in God, it was full of all sweetness.

But the one who wants to taste of its sweetness should approach the sweetness and assume it into himself. This is also what you did, my most sweet Mother. You were so sweet to my Father that he assumed all of you into his Spirit, and your sweetness delighted him above all other things. The flower also bears a seed by the heat and power of the sun and from it grows a fruit. In this way the blessed sun, my Divinity, assumed Manhood from your virginal womb. For just as the seed makes and grows flowers of the same kind as the seed

wherever it is sown, so my limbs were like yours in shape and appearance, even though I was a man and you a woman and a virgin. This valley was uplifted with its flower above all mountains when your body together with your most holy soul was lifted up above all the choirs of angels.”

The Mother blesses her Son and prays to him that his words might be spread all over the world and take root in the hearts of his friends. And about how the Virgin is compared to a wonderful flower growing in a garden, and about the words of Christ that were sent through the bride to the pope and to other prelates of the Church.

Chapter 52

The Holy Virgin spoke to the Son and said: “Blessed be you, my Son and my God, Lord of angels and King of glory! I beg of you that the words that you have spoken may take root in the hearts of your friends and that their minds may cling as firmly to these words as the pitch with which Noah’s ark was plastered, which neither storm-waves nor winds could break and dissolve. May they be spread out all over the world like branches and sweet flowers whose fragrance is spread far and wide, in order that they also may bear fruit and become sweet like the date whose sweetness delights the soul exceedingly much.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my most beloved Mother! My angel Gabriel said to you: “Blessed art thou, Mary, among women!” And I bear witness to you that you are blessed and most holy above all the choirs of angels. You are like a flower in a garden that is surrounded by other fragrant flowers, but surpasses them all in scent, beauty, and virtue. These flowers are all the chosen men from Adam to the end of the world which were planted in the garden of the world and shone and smelled in manifold virtues. But among all of those who were and who will afterward come, you were the greatest in the fragrance of humility and a good life, in the beauty of the most pleasing virginity, and in the virtue of abstinence. For I bear witness to you that you were more than any martyr at my suffering, more than

any confessor in your abstinence, and more than any angel in your mercy and good will. Therefore, for your sake, I will enroot and fasten my words like the strongest pitch in the hearts of my friends. They shall spread out like fragrant flowers and bear fruit like the sweetest and most wonderful date-palm.”

Thereafter, our Lord spoke to his bride: “Tell my friend, your father, whose heart is according to my heart, that he carefully present these written words to his own father and also give them to the archbishop and later to the other bishop. And when these have been thoroughly instructed, he may send them to the third bishop. Tell him also on my behalf: “I am your Creator and the Redeemer of souls. I am God whom you love above all things. See and consider how the souls which I redeemed with my blood are like the souls of men who know nothing about God, and they are imprisoned by the devil in such cruelty that he torments them in all their limbs as in a hard press. Therefore, if you savor my wounds in your soul, and if you account anything of the scourging and suffering that I endured as precious, then show by your deeds how much you love me. The words that I have spoken with my own mouth shall be made known publicly and brought to the head of the Church.

I shall namely give you my grace and my Spirit so that, wherever there is a quarrel between two, you may be able to reconcile them in my name through the power given to you, if they believe in my words. And as a further clarification of my words, you shall bring to the pope the testimonies of those who taste and delight in my words. For my words are like fat which melts more quickly when the warmth is greater inside, but if no warmth is found, the fat is thrown up and does not reach the intestines. This is how my words are, since the more a man eats and chews on them with a burning love for me, the more he is fed with the desire for heaven and the sweetness of the divine inner love, and the more he burns in my love and charity. But those who do not delight in my words may be likened to having lard in their mouths which they immediately spit out of their mouths and trample under their feet once they have tasted it. Some people despise my words in this way because they have no taste for the sweetness of spiritual things. But the lord of the land, whom I have chosen as my member

and made truly mine, will help you manfully and provide you with the necessary things for your journey out of righteously acquired goods.”

The Mother and Son's words of blessing for each other, and about how the Virgin is likened to the ark wherein the staff, the manna, and the tablets of the Law were, and many wonderful things are revealed in this comparison.

Chapter 53

The Virgin Mary spoke to the Son and said: “Blessed be you, my Son, my God, and Lord of angels! You are the one whose voice the prophets heard, whose body the apostles saw, and the one whom the Jews and your enemies laid their hands on. You are one God with your Divinity and Manhood and Holy Spirit. For the prophets heard the Spirit, the apostles saw the glory of your Divinity, and the Jews crucified your Manhood. Therefore, may you be blessed without beginning and without end.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, for you are Virgin and Mother. You are the Ark of the Old Law in which there were three things: the staff of Aaron that blossomed, the manna of angels, and the tablets of the Law.

Three things were done with the staff: First, it was transformed into a snake without venom. Second, the ocean was divided by it. Third, it brought forth water out of the rock. I, who lay in your womb and assumed Manhood from you, liken myself with this staff. First, I am as terrifying to my enemies as the snake was to Moses. For they flee from me as from the sight of a snake, and they are terrified of me and abhor me like a venomous snake; and yet I am without the venom of malice and am instead all full of mercy. I allow myself to be held by them, if they want. I return to them if they search for me. I run to them like a mother to her lost and recovered son, if they call on me. I give them my mercy and forgive their sins, if they cry out to me. This is what I do for them, and yet they abhor me like a venomous snake.

Second, the ocean was divided by this staff when the way to heaven, which was closed for the sake of sin, was opened through the shedding of my blood and my pain. The ocean was indeed divided and a way was made, where there before had been no way, when the pain in all my limbs went to my heart, and my heart burst from the violence of the pain. Later, when the people had been led through the ocean, Moses did not lead them to the promised land immediately but to the desert, so that they would be tested and instructed there. This is how it is now, for when the people have accepted my faith and my commandments, they are not led into heaven immediately; for it is necessary that men should be tested in the desert - that is, in the world - as to how much they love God.

However, the people provoked God into anger by three things in the desert: First, because they made an idol and prayed to it. Second, because they longed after the fleshpots that they had in the land of Egypt and third, through their pride, when they, without the will of God, wanted to go and fight against their enemies. People sin against me even now in the world in the same way.

First, they honor and worship an idol: for they love the world and all the things in it more than me, who am their Creator. Therefore, the world is their god, and not I. For I said in my gospel: "Where a man's treasure is, there his heart is also." So, mankind's treasure is the world, since their heart yearns towards it and not to me. Therefore, just as the Jews fell in the desert with a sword in their bodies, so too shall these people fall with the sword of eternal damnation in their soul and they shall live in damnation without end.

Second, they sinned through their longing for fleshpots. I gave mankind everything he needed to use in an honorable and moderate way, but he wants to have all things without moderation and reason. For, if his bodily nature could bear it, he would without end have sex, drink without restraint, desire without measure and limit, and, as long as he could sin, he would never desist from sin. Therefore, the same thing will happen to them that happened to the Jews in the desert, that is, they will die a sudden death in their body. For what is this temporal life other than a single moment compared to eternity? For this reason,

they shall die a sudden death in their bodies to be torn away from this short life and live with torment in their souls for all eternity.

Third, they sinned in the desert through their pride, since they wanted to go to battle without God's will. Likewise, people want to go to Heaven through their pride, and they do not trust in me but in themselves, doing their own will and abandoning mine. Therefore, they shall be killed in their souls by devils just as the Jews were killed by their enemies, and their torment shall be everlasting. They thus hate me like a snake, worship an idol instead of me, long for their own desires more than me, and love their own pride instead of my humility. Yet, I am still so merciful that I will turn to them like a loving father and take them to me if they turn to me with a repentant heart.

Third, the rock gave water through this staff. This rock is the hard heart of mankind, for if it is pierced with my fear and love, there immediately flow tears of repentance and penance out of it. No one is so unworthy and no one is so evil that he will not have tears flowing from his eyes and all his limbs awakened to devotion if he turns to me in a heartfelt contemplation of my suffering and bethinks how my power and goodness makes the earth and trees bear fruit.

Second, the manna of angels lay in the ark of Moses. So, too, in you my beloved Mother and Virgin, lay the bread of angels and of holy souls and of righteous men on earth, whom nothing pleases but my sweetness; for all of the world is dead to them, so that they would gladly go even without bodily nourishment if it were my will.

Third, in the ark were the tablets of the Law. So, too, in you lay the Lord of all laws. Therefore, may you be blessed above everything created in Heaven and on earth!"

Then Christ spoke to his bride and said: "Tell my friends three things. When I was bodily in the world, I adjusted my words so that good men were made stronger and more fervent in doing good things, and evil men became better, as was seen in the conversion of Magdalene, Matthew, and many others. I also adjusted my words so that my enemies were not able to refute them. For that reason, may

they to whom my words are sent, work with fervor, so that through my words, the good may become more ardent in goodness, the evil repent from wickedness, and that they themselves be on guard against my enemies so that my words are not obstructed. In truth, I do no greater injustice to the devil than to the angels in Heaven. For if I wanted, I could speak my words so that the whole world hears them. I could also open up hell so that everyone may see its torments, but this would not be justice, since all men would then serve me out of fear, when they should serve me out of love. For no other than the one who has love shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. For I would be doing injustice to the devil if I took away from him one who is rightfully his, because of sin, and who is devoid of good deeds. I would also do injustice to the angel in Heaven, if I placed the spirit of an unclean man as an equal to the one who is pure and most fervent in my love.

Therefore, no one shall enter Heaven, but the one who has been purged like gold in the fire of purgatory or who has proved himself over a long duration of time in good deeds on earth so that there is no stain in him left to be purged away. If you do not know to whom my words should be sent, I will tell you: The one who is worthy to have my words is the one who wants to gain merit through good deeds in order to come to the kingdom of Heaven or who already has deserved it with their good deeds in the past. To such as these shall my words be opened up to and enter into them. Those who have a taste for my words and who humbly hope that their names are written in the Book of Life keep my words. But those who have no taste for my words, consider them first, but then throw up and vomit them out immediately.”

The words of an angel to the bride about whether the spirit of her thoughts is good or bad, and about how there are two spirits, one uncreated and one created, and about their characteristics.

Chapter 54

A holy angel spoke to the bride and said: “There are two spirits, one uncreated and one created. The uncreated Spirit has three characteristics: First, he is hot; second, sweet; and third, pure. First, he gives off warmth, and his warmth does not come from created things but from himself, since he, together with the Father and the Son, is Creator of all things and Almighty. He gives off warmth when the whole soul burns for the love of God. Second, he is sweet, when nothing pleases the soul and nothing delights it but God and the recollection of his deeds. Third, he is so pure that no sin can be found in him, nor any deformity or corruption or mutability. He does not give off warmth like earthly fire, and he does not make things melt like the visible sun, but his warmth is the inner love and desire of the soul that fills the soul and engrosses her in God. He is sweet to the soul, not as a desirable wine or fleshly lust or any other worldly thing, but instead, the sweetness of this Spirit is incomparable to all temporal sweetness and unimaginable to those who have not tasted it. Third, this Spirit is as pure as the rays of the sun in which no blemish can be found.

The second spirit that is created also has three characteristics. He is burning, bitter, and unclean. First, he is burning and consuming like fire, for he completely enkindles the soul he possesses with the fire of lust and evil desire, so that the soul that is filled by him can neither think nor desire anything other than fulfilling this desire; and the consequence of this is that her temporal life is sometimes lost along with all honor and consolation. Second, he is bitter as gall, since he so inflames the soul with his evil lust, that future joys seem like nothing to her and eternal goods but foolishness. And all the things that are of God and which she, the soul, is obligated to do for God, become as bitter and despicable to her as vomit and gall. Third, he is unclean, since he makes the soul so vile and inclined to sin that she does not feel ashamed for any sin, and she would not abstain from any sin, if she did not fear being shamed and judged before men more than before God. This is why this spirit is like a burning fire, because he burns of desire to do evil and enkindles others along with itself. This is why he is bitter, because all good is bitter to him and he wants to make it bitter for others as well as for himself. This is why he is

unclean, because he delights in impurity and wants that others shall become like himself.

But now you might ask and say to me: “Are you not also a created spirit like him? Why, then, are you not like that?” I answer you: I am indeed created by the same God as he, for there is only one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and these are not three gods, but one God. Both of us were well made and created for the good, since God has created nothing but good. But I am like a star, for I remained in the goodness and love of God in which I was created. He, however, is like coal, since he left the love of God. Just as a star has brightness and splendor, whereas coal has blackness and filth, so the good angel, who is like a star, has his splendor, that is, the Holy Spirit - since everything he has, he has from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from whose love he becomes set on fire and from whose splendor he shines - constantly clinging to him and conforming himself after his will without ever wanting anything other than what God wants. And this is why he is burning; this is why he is pure.

The devil however is like ugly coal, and is uglier and more deformed than any other created creature. For just as he once was more beautiful than others, so he had to become uglier than others since he opposed himself against his Creator. Just as the angel of God shines with the light of God and burns incessantly by his love, so the devil is always burning and anguishing in his malice. His malice is insatiable, just as the goodness and grace of the Holy Spirit are inexpressible. For no one in this world is so rooted in the devil that the Holy Spirit does not sometimes visit and touch his heart. Likewise is no one so good that the devil does not gladly try to touch him with temptation. Many good and righteous men are tempted by the devil with God’s permission, and this is not because of their wickedness but for their greater glory. Indeed, the Son of God, who is one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, was tempted when he had assumed Manhood; and how much more should not his elect be tempted then, so that their reward and glory may become greater!

Again, many good people sometimes fall into sin, and their conscience is darkened by the treachery of the devil, but then they get

up again, being stronger and more steadfast than before through the virtue and power of the Holy Spirit. There is no one who does not understand in his conscience whether the suggestion of the devil leads to the ugliness of sin or to the good, if he would only think about and examine his conscience carefully. Therefore may you, bride of my Lord, not doubt whether the spirit of your thoughts is good or bad, for your conscience tells you which things to exclude and which to do.

But what should the one who is full of the devil do, since the good Spirit cannot enter him who is full of evil? He should do three things: First, he should make a pure and complete confession of his sins. Even if he cannot directly feel a complete remorse for his sins due to his hardened heart, still the confession will benefit him so much that the devil ceases with his treachery and yields to the good spirit. Second, he should be humble and wish to amend for all the sins he has committed and do the good deeds he can, and then the devil will begin to leave. Third, he should beseech God with humble prayer in order that he may get the good Spirit back and have contrition for the sins he has committed along with true divine love, since the love for God kills the devil. This devil is so envious and full of malice that he would rather die a hundred times than see someone do God the least little good deed out of love.”

Thereafter, the Holy Virgin spoke to the bride, saying: “New bride of my Son, put on your clothes and fasten your brooch, that is, my Son’s suffering!” She answered her: “My sweet Lady, put it on me yourself.” And the Virgin said: “Yes, I shall do it. I also want to tell you how my Son was disposed and why the holy fathers longed for him so fervently. He stood, as it were, in between two great cities, and a voice from the first city cried out to him saying: “O man, standing in between the cities, you are a wise man, for you know how to beware of coming dangers and injuries. You are also strong in the suffering of overhanging evils, and you are brave as well since you fear nothing. We have longed for and awaited you. Therefore, open our gate, for our enemies are besieging it so that it cannot be opened.”

A voice from the second city was heard saying thus: “You, the most kind and strong of men, hear our complaint and lament! We sit in

darkness and suffer unbearable hunger and thirst. Consider our misery and our great distress. We are beaten like grass cut by a scythe. All goodness has dried and withered away in us; and all our strength has faded away in us. We beg you to come to us and save us, for you alone are the one we have awaited and hoped for as our liberator! Come and release us from our distress, turn our lamentation into joy, and be our help and salvation! Come, most blessed and worthy body, which proceeded from the pure Virgin!” My Son heard these two voices from the two cities, that is, from Heaven and hell. That is why he had mercy on them and opened up the gates of hell through his most bitter suffering and the shedding of his blood and brought his friends out of there. He opened up Heaven, too, to the joy of the angels, and led the ones into Heaven whom he had rescued from hell. My daughter, think on these things and have them always before your eyes!”

About how Christ is likened to a mighty lord who built a great city and a marvelous castle, signifying the world and the church, and how the judges and defenders and workers in the church of God have been changed into a bad bow.

Chapter 55

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: “I am like a powerful lord who built a great city and named it after himself. Thereafter, he built a castle in the city in which there were many rooms for storing all kinds of useful necessities. Then, when he had built the castle and arranged all his things, he divided his people into three groups, saying: ‘I am going away to a far away country. Stand firm and work manfully for my glory! I have made arrangements for your food and your necessities, and you have judges to judge you and defenders to defend you from your enemies. I have also arranged for working men who shall feed you and give me a tenth part of their work, saving it for my use and my honor.’

But after some time had gone by, the name of the city was forgotten. Then the judges said: ‘Our lord has traveled to a far away country. Let us judge righteous judgments and do justice so that, when

our lord returns, we may not be punished and be accused but receive honor and blessing.' Then the defenders said: 'Our lord trusts us very much and has left the defense of his house to us. Let us therefore abstain from superfluous food and drink so that we may not become unfit for battle. Let us also abstain from excessive sleep so that we may guard ourselves and not be trapped unawares. May we be well armed and constantly watchful so that we may not be found unprepared when enemies come. The honor of our lord and the salvation of our people depend very much on us.' Then the workers said: 'The glory of our lord is great and his reward is glorious and grand. Let us therefore work mightily and give him not only a tenth of our work but also offer him everything above our living expenses! Our reward shall become more glorious the greater the love he sees in us.'

Thereafter, some time went by, and the name of the city and the lord of the castle became forgotten. Then the judges said to themselves: 'The delay of our lord is long, and we do not know if he will return or not. Let us therefore judge according to our own will and do what we please.' The defenders said: 'We are fools, because we work and know not what reward we shall receive. Let us enter into a covenant with our enemies instead and sleep and drink with them, for we do not care about whose enemies they have been.' Thereafter, the workers said: 'Why do we save our gold for others, when we do not know who will get it after us? It is better that we use it ourselves and dispose of it after our own will. Let us therefore give the tenth to the judges and placate them so that we then can do what we want.'

In truth, I am like this mighty lord, for I built myself a city, that is, the world, and placed a castle there, that is, the church. The name of the world was divine wisdom, for the world had this name from the beginning, since it was created in divine wisdom. This name was venerated by all, and God was praised in his wisdom and wondrously proclaimed by his creatures. But now the name of the city has been dishonored and changed, and a new name has been taken, that is, human wisdom.

For the judges, who before had made judgments in righteousness and the fear of the Lord, have now turned to pride and are trying to

deceive simple men. They desire to be eloquent so that they may win human praise, and they speak and preach that which pleases men so that they may obtain favors. They tolerate calmly all words so that they may be called good and patient, and they accept bribes to overturn righteous judgments. They are wise for the sake of their own temporal benefit and their own will, but dumb when it comes to my praise. They trample and press down simple men under their feet and force them into silence. They extend their greed to all and make right into wrong. This is the kind of wisdom that is loved now, while my wisdom is forgotten.

The defenders of the church, who are the noblemen and knights, see my enemies and the attackers of my Church but do not care about it. They hear their words of blasphemy and mockery but do not care about it. They perceive and understand the deeds of those who attack my commandments and still bear them patiently. They behold them daily committing all kinds of mortal sins, as if they were allowed, and feel no compunction about it, but sleep and associate with them, binding themselves by oath to their company.

The workers, that is, the entire people, reject my commandments and withhold my gifts and my tenth. They offer gifts to their judges and show them honor and reverence in order to win their favor and goodwill. In truth, I can boldly say that the sword of fear for me and for my Church is thrown away in the world, and that a sack of money has been put in its place.”

The words in which God explains the nearest preceding chapter, and about the judgment that he makes against such people, and about how God for a while endures the evil for the sake of the good.

Chapter 56

“I told you before that the sword of my Church is thrown away and that a sack of money has been put in its place, which is open at one end. The other end is so deep, that whatever one puts into it never

reaches the bottom, and so the sack never gets filled. This sack is greed, which exceeds all measures and now has become so powerful that the Lord is scorned and nothing is desired but money and the selfish will of man. But I am like a lord who is both father and judge. When he shall go forth and judge, the bystanders say to him: 'Lord, proceed quickly and make your judgment!' The Lord answers them: 'Wait a little until tomorrow, because perhaps my son will still amend himself in the meantime.'

When he comes back the next day, the people say to him: 'Proceed, Lord, and make your judgment! Why are you postponing the judgment for so long and do not judge the guilty?' The Lord answers them: 'Wait a little while longer, to see if my son betters himself, and if he then does not repent, I shall make a just judgment over him.' In this way I patiently endure mankind even until the last moment, since I am both father and judge. But my justice is unchangeable, and even though it sometimes is postponed a long time, I will still either punish sinners who do not better themselves or show them mercy if they amend themselves.

I also told you before that I divided the people into three groups: namely, judges, defenders, and workers. What do these judges signify if not the priests who have turned the divine wisdom into an evil and useless wisdom? Like clerks who take many words and assemble them into a few words, which say the same thing as the many did, so too have these present-day clerics taken my ten commandments and assembled them into a single one. And what is this single word if not: 'Reach out your hand and give us money!' This is their wisdom, to speak beautifully, to act badly and to pretend to be my servants while yet acting maliciously against me. For the sake of gifts, they gladly put up with sinners in their sins and bring about the downfall of simpleminded people through their bad example. Furthermore, they hate those who walk on my way. Second, the defenders of the Church, that is, the knights, are unfaithful, since they have broken their promise and their oath and gladly endure those who sin against the faith and law of my Holy Church. Third, the workers, that is, the whole people, are like untamed bulls which have three things: First, they dig the earth with their feet; second, they fill themselves to

satiety; third, they fulfill their own lusts according to their own desire. Likewise does now the whole people crave after temporal goods with all of their desire, filling itself with immoderate gluttony and worldly vanity and practicing its carnal lust and delight without reason.

But even though my enemies are many, I still have many friends among them, although hidden. As it was said to Elijah, who thought none of my friends were left in the world but himself: "I have seven thousand men who have not bowed their knees to Baal." So, even though my enemies are many, I still have some friends hidden among them who cry daily because my enemies are superior and because my name is despised. Therefore, for the sake of their prayers, I shall do like a charitable and good king who knows the evil deeds of the city but patiently endures its residents and sends letters to his friends to forewarn them of their danger. In this way I send my words to my friends; and they are not so obscure as the words in the Apocalypse which I revealed to John in an obscure way in order that they would be interpreted by my Spirit at the time that pleased me. Nor are they so hidden that they cannot be proclaimed - as when Paul saw many of my hidden secrets that he was not allowed to speak about - but they are so plain, that all, both small and big, can understand them, and so easy, that all who want to, can grasp and understand them.

Therefore, let my friends see to it that my words reach my enemies, so that they, perhaps, convert themselves and feel sorrow and remorse for their sins, when their peril and my judgment are made known to them. Otherwise, the city will be judged so severely that, just as a wall is torn down without leaving stone upon stone, so that not even two stones join to each other in the foundation, so shall it be with the city, that is, with the world.

The judges shall burn in the hottest fire. There is no fire hotter than the one that is fed with some fat. These judges were fat, since they had more opportunities of fulfilling their lust and will than others; they surpassed others in honor and temporal abundance, and abounded more in malice and unrighteousness. Therefore, they will burn in the hottest pan, that is, in the torments of hell!

The defenders shall be hanged on the highest gallows. A gallows consists of two vertical timber beams with a third placed above the others horizontally. This gallows with two wooden beams signifies their cruel and severe torment, which is, so to speak, made from two pieces of wood. The first beam signifies that they did not hope for my eternal reward nor worked for it with their good deeds. The second beam signifies that they did not trust in my power and goodness, when they thought I was not able to do all things or did not want to provide for them sufficiently. The wooden crossbeam signifies their evil conscience, for they understood very well what they should do but, instead, did evil and felt no shame about acting against their conscience. The rope of the gallows signifies the everlasting fire which can neither be extinguished by water nor cut by scissors nor be destroyed and broken by old age. On this gallows of the most cruel torment and inextinguishable fire, they will hang and feel shame and distress like unhappy traitors, since they were disloyal. They will hear insults, since my words displeased them. A woe shall be in their mouths, since their own honor and praise delighted them. They shall be mangled on this gallows by living crows, that is, by devils who can never get their fill, and even though they be wounded, they shall never be consumed, but they shall live in torment without end and their torturers shall also live without end. There shall be a woe that will never end and a misery that will never be mitigated. Woe unto them, that they were ever born! Woe unto them, that their life was so long!

And lastly concerning the workers, their just sentence will be the same as for bulls. For the bulls have very hard flesh and skin. Therefore, their judgment shall be the sharpest steel. This most sharp steel is the death of hell that will torment those who scorned me and loved their own will instead of my commandments.

The letter, that is, my words, are now written. May my friends work wisely and reasonably so that it comes to my enemies, for perhaps they will want to hear them and repent from their wickedness. But if some, after having heard my words, should say: "Let us wait a little moment, the judgment is not yet coming, it is not yet his time," then I swear by my Divinity which cast out Adam from paradise and

sent ten plagues over Pharaoh, that I will come to them faster than they think.

I swear by my Manhood, which I assumed without sin from the Virgin for the salvation of mankind, and in which I endured sorrow in my heart and suffered bodily torment and death for the eternal life of men, and in which I rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven and am seated at the right hand of the Father, true God and true Man in one person, that I shall fulfill my words.

I swear by my Spirit, which descended over the apostles on the day of Pentecost and inflamed them so that they spoke in the language of all peoples, that unless they better themselves and return to me like weak servants, I shall execute vengeance over them in my wrath. Then there shall be a woe in soul and body! Woe unto them that they came alive into the world and lived in the world! Woe unto them, for their lust was small and vain but their torment shall be everlasting! Then they shall perceive what they now scorn to believe, namely, that my words were words of love. Then they shall understand that I admonished them like a father, even though they did not want to hear me. In truth, if they do not want to believe in my words of goodwill, they will have to believe in the deeds when they come.

The words of our Lord to the bride about how he is loathsome and despicable food for the souls of Christians, and how the world, instead, is loved and found to be delightful by them, and about the terrifying judgment that is executed over such people.

Chapter 57

The Son of God spoke to his bride: “Christians are now acting towards me as the Jews acted towards me. The Jews drove me out of the temple and had a complete will to kill me, but since my hour had not yet come, I escaped from their hands. Christians act towards me in the same way now. They drive me out of their temple (that is, out of their soul, which should be my temple) and they would gladly want to

kill me if they could. I am like rotten and stinking flesh in their mouths. I seem, to them, to be like a man who utters lies, and they do not care about me at all. They turn their backs to me, but I will turn my neck to them, since there is nothing but craving in their mouths and irrational beastly lust in their flesh. Only pride is delightful in their ears, only the lust of the world delights their eyes. My suffering and my love are detestable to them and my life heavy and burdensome. Therefore, I shall do as the animal which had many dens: when hunters pursued and drove it from one den, it escaped into another. This is what I will do, because Christians are chasing me away with their bad deeds and driving me out of the den of their hearts.

Therefore, I want to go to the heathens in whose mouths I am now bitter and distasteful, but I will become sweeter than honey in their mouths. Nevertheless, I am still so merciful that I will happily receive each and everyone who begs for my forgiveness and says: ‘Lord, I know that I have sinned severely and I gladly want to better myself through your grace. Have mercy on me for the sake of your bitter suffering.’ But to those who harden themselves in their evil, I shall come like a warrior that has three characteristics: namely, dreadfulness, strength, and severity. I shall come and be so terrifying to the Christians that they will not dare to move the least finger against me. I shall also come to them with such strength that they will be like mosquitoes before me. Third, I shall come to them with such severity that they will feel a woe in this world and a woe without end.”

The words of the Mother to the bride about how sweet the Mother and the Son are to each other. How Christ is bitter, bitterer, and most bitter for the evil, and how he is sweet, sweeter, and most sweet for the good.

Chapter 58

The Mother of God said to the bride: “Consider, new bride of my Son, the suffering of my Son, which surpassed in bitterness the

suffering of all the saints. Just as a mother would feel the most bitter sorrow and anguish if she saw her son being cut to pieces alive, so, too, was I grieving at the torments of my Son when I saw his bitter sufferings.” Then she spoke to her Son, saying: “Blessed be you, my Son, for you are holy, as it is sung: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Sabaoth.’ Blessed be you, for you are sweet, sweeter, and most sweet! You were holy before you assumed Manhood, holy in my womb, and holy after you assumed Manhood. You were sweet before the creation of the world, sweeter to the angels, and most sweet to me when you assumed Manhood from me.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my beloved Mother, above all the angels. Just as I, in a threefold way, was most sweet for you, as you were saying now, so I am bitter, bitterer, and most bitter for the wicked. I am bitter for those who say I have created many things without a reason and who scornfully say I have created mankind for death and not for life. What a miserable and foolish thought! Did I, who am the most righteous and virtuous, create the angels without a reason? Would I have enriched mankind with so many good things if I had created him for damnation? By no means! I created all things well and gave every good to mankind out of my love. But he, however, turned all good things into evil for himself. It is not because I created anything evil, but mankind moves his will in another way than he should, and not according to God’s law, and this is evil.

But I am bitterer for those who say that I have given them a free will to sin and not to do good, who say I am unjust since I condemn some and justify others, and who blame me for their own wickedness because I withhold my grace from them. I am most bitter for those who say that my law and commandments are exceedingly harsh and difficult and that no one is able to keep them, who say my suffering is worth nothing for them, and who therefore count it for nothing.

Therefore, I swear by my life, as once I swore through the prophets, that I shall justify myself before the angels and all my saints. Those for whom I am bitter shall understand that I created all things reasonably and well for the use and education of mankind, and that not the smallest worm exists without a reason. Those for whom I am

bitterer shall understand that I wisely gave men a free will for their own good. They will also know that I am just, giving the eternal kingdom to good men, but everlasting torment to the wicked. For it would not be proper for the devil, who was created good by me but who fell through his own malice, to have fellowship with the good. The wicked will also understand that it is not my fault that they are evil, but their own fault. For if it were possible, I would gladly take upon myself the same torment for each and every man that I once suffered on the cross for all, if thereby they could return to their promised inheritance. But the will of mankind is always opposed to mine. I gave him liberty to serve me, if he would, and to gain the eternal reward; but if he does not want to, he should be tormented together with the devil and his followers, for whose malice, hell was justly created.

But because I am full of charity, I do not want mankind to serve me out of fear or be forced to do so like an irrational animal but out of love for God, for no one who serves me unwillingly or out of fear of torment can see my face. But those for whom I am most bitter will understand in their consciences that my law was most easy and my yoke most sweet. They will feel inconsolable sadness that they despised my law and instead loved the world, whose yoke is heavier and much more difficult than my yoke.”

Then the Mother of God answered: “Blessed be you, my Son, my God, and my Lord! Since you were most sweet for me, I beg of you that others may be made partakers of my sweetness!” The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my most dear Mother! Your words are sweet and full of love. Therefore shall each and everyone who takes your sweetness into his mouth and keeps it perfectly be benefited thereby. But the one who takes it and spits it out again will be tormented all the more bitterly.” Then the Virgin answered: “Blessed be you, my Son, for all your mercy and love!”

The words of Christ, in the presence of the bride, about how Christ is likened to a peasant, good priests to a good shepherd, bad priests to a bad shepherd, and good Christians to a wife. Many useful things are also explained in this parable.

Chapter 59

“I am the one who never said anything false. The world considers me to be a peasant whose name seems contemptible. My words are counted as foolish and my house is considered a despicable shed. This peasant had a wife who wanted nothing other than what he wanted, who owned everything with him and had him as her master, obeying him in all things as her master. This peasant also had many sheep, and he hired a shepherd to watch over them for five gold coins and for the necessities of his bodily needs. Since this was a good shepherd, he used the gold to his benefit and the food for his sustenance. After some time had gone by, this shepherd moved and another shepherd came who was worse, who bought himself a wife with the gold and brought her his food, constantly taking his rest with her without caring about the sheep that were being lamentably scattered by cruel beasts.

When the peasant saw how his sheep were being scattered, he cried out saying: ‘My shepherd is unfaithful to me! My sheep are scattered by the most cruel beasts. Some of them are completely devoured by the beasts with body and fleece, while others are dead but their bodies left uneaten.’ Then the wife said to her husband the peasant: ‘My Lord, it is certain that we will not get back the bodies that are devoured, but the bodies who have remained unharmed, even though they are without life, should be brought home and made use of by us. For it would be unbearable for us if we lost everything.’ The husband answered her: ‘But what shall we do? Since the animals had venomous teeth, the flesh of the sheep has also become poisoned with deadly venom, the hide is ruined, and the wool is all tangled.’ The wife answered: ‘If everything is infected and ruined and everything taken from us, what shall we then live on?’

The husband answered her: ‘I see that there are sheep still alive in three places. Some are like the dead sheep and do not dare to breathe out of fear. Other sheep are lying deep in filth and cannot raise themselves up. Still others lie in hiding places and dare not come forth. Come therefore, my wife, and let us lift up the sheep that are

trying to raise themselves up but cannot do so without help, and let us make use of them to our own benefit.'

Behold, I the Lord am this peasant, for men consider me to be a donkey raised in its stall according to its ways and habits. My name is the foundation of the Holy Church, but she is now considered to be contemptible, since the sacraments of the Church, namely baptism, confirmation, anointing, penance, and matrimony, are taken, as it were, with derision and given to others for the sake of greed. My words and deeds are considered and judged to be foolish and vain, for the words that I spoke in parables with my own mouth, have now been converted from a spiritual understanding to temporal entertainment. My house is looked on as contemptible, for the things of the earth are loved instead of the things of Heaven.

With this first shepherd I had, I symbolize my friends the priests, which I used to have in the Holy Church; for by a single word, I mean and signify many. I entrusted them with my sheep, that is, to consecrate my most venerable body and to rule and defend the souls of my chosen ones. I also gave them five good things more precious than all gold: First, an insight and understanding about all abstruse things so that they will be able to distinguish between good and evil, and between truth and falsehood. Second, I gave them understanding and wisdom in spiritual things; this has now been forgotten and human wisdom is loved instead. Third, I gave them chastity; fourth, temperance in all things and abstinence for the restraining and guidance of their body; fifth, steadfastness in good habits, words, and deeds.

After this first shepherd, that is, after these friends of mine, who used to be in my Church in days of old, other unrighteous shepherds came that bought a wife for themselves with the gold, that is, they took to themselves the body of a woman and intemperance instead of chastity and these five good things, and that is why my Spirit departed from them. For when they have a complete will to sin and to satisfy their wife, that is, to satisfy their lust, then my Spirit is absent from them, since they do not care about the perdition of the sheep so long as they can fulfill their evil lust. But the sheep that are completely

devoured are those whose souls are in hell and whose bodies are buried in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the eternal damnation. The sheep whose flesh remains but whose spirit is taken away, are those who neither love me nor fear me nor feel any devotion or care toward me. My Spirit is far away from them, since their flesh is poisoned by the venomous teeth of the beasts, that is, their soul and their thoughts, which are symbolized by the sheep's flesh and intestines, are in every way as disgusting to me and as repulsive to taste as is poisoned meat. From their hide, that is, from their body, has all goodness and charity dried out and it is unfit for any service in my kingdom and shall be delivered to the everlasting fire of hell after the judgment. Their wool, that is, their deeds, are so altogether useless that there is nothing in them that would make them worthy to receive my love and grace.

But what shall we do then, my wife, that is, good Christians, whom the wife symbolizes, what should we do? I see that sheep are alive in three places. Some of them look like the dead sheep and do not dare to breathe out of fear. These are the gentiles who would gladly have the right faith, if only they knew how, but who do not dare to breathe, that is, they do not dare to leave the faith that they have and take the right faith. The second sheep are those lying in hiding places who do not dare to come forth, and these are the Jews who live, so to speak, under a veil, and who would gladly come forth if they knew for certain that I was born. They namely hide themselves under a veil, since their hope for salvation is in the figures and signs that used to symbolize me in the Old Law but which in truth have been fulfilled in me, and because of this vain hope they are afraid to come forth to the right faith. The third sheep that lie in the filth are Christians in the state of mortal sin. They would gladly raise themselves up because of their fear of the torment, but they cannot due to their heavy sins and because they have no divine love. Therefore, my wife, that is, good Christians, help me! For just as a wife and a man should be one flesh and one limb, so the Christian is my limb and I am his, since I am in him and he is in me.

Therefore, o wife of mine, that is, good Christians, run with me to the sheep that still have a breath of life and let us lift them up and

refresh them! Have compassion on me, for I bought them at a very high price! Let us lift them up, you with me and me with you, you at the back and I at the head! I gladly carry them with my hands. Once I carried them all on my back when it was all lacerated and fastened to the cross. O my friends, I love these sheep so dearly that, if it were possible for me to suffer such a death for each sheep as I once suffered on the cross for all of them, I would rather redeem them than want to lose them. That is why I cry out to my friends with all my heart that they should not spare goods or work for my sake; for if I was not spared from reproaching and insulting words while I was in the world, they should not spare themselves in speaking the truth about me. I was not ashamed to suffer a contemptible death for their sake, but stood there naked, just as I was born, before the eyes of my enemies. I was struck in the teeth with their fists. I was dragged by the hair with their fingers and scourged by their scourges. I was fastened to the cross with their tools, and I hung on the cross between thieves and robbers. Therefore, my friends, do not spare yourself in working for me since I endured such things out of love for you. Work manfully and bring help to all my sheep in distress.

I swear by my Manhood, which is in the Father as the Father is in me, and by my Divinity, which is in my Spirit as the Spirit is in the Divinity and the same Spirit is in me and I in him, and these are one God in three persons, that I shall run out to meet those halfway who work in carrying my sheep with me and help them, and I shall give them the most precious reward, namely, myself unto their everlasting joy.”

The words of the Son to the bride about the three kinds of Christians that are symbolized by the Jews living in Egypt, and about how the things which have been revealed to the bride should be transmitted, published and preached to ignorant persons by the friends of God.

Chapter 60

The Son of God spoke to the bride and said: “I am the God of Israel and the one who spoke with Moses. When Moses was sent to my people, he begged for a sign, saying: ‘The people will not believe me otherwise.’ But if the people to whom Moses was sent were the Lord’s people, why did they not believe? You should know that this people consisted of three kinds of men: Some believed in God and Moses. Others believed in God but distrusted Moses, in that they thought that he, perhaps of his own invention and presumption, had presumed to say and do these things. The third were those who neither believed in God nor in Moses.

In the same way, there are now three kinds of men among Christians who are symbolized by the Hebrew people: There are some who rightly believe in God and in my words. There are others who believe in God but distrust my words, because they cannot distinguish between the good and the evil spirit. The third are those who neither believe in me nor in you to whom I have spoken my words. But, as I said, even though some of the Hebrews distrusted Moses, nevertheless they all went through the Red Sea with him and into the desert where those who had not believed worshipped idols and provoked God into wrath, which is why they also died in the most miserable of deaths. But only those who had an evil faith did so.

Therefore, my friend shall carry my words to those who believe him, since the human soul is slow to believe. And these shall afterwards spread them to others who do not know how to distinguish between the good and the evil spirit. But if the hearers beg them for a sign, let them show those men the staff, just as Moses did, that is, let them explain my words to them. For just as the staff of Moses was straight and terrifying (for it was transformed into a snake), so are my words straight so that no falsehood can be found in them. They are terrifying, since they proclaim the righteous judgment. Let them also explain and testify that, by a word and sound of a single mouth, the devil yielded from the creature of God - he who could move mountains, if he were not restrained by my power. What kind of power belonged to him when, with God’s permission, he was driven away by the sound of a single word?

Therefore, just as those Hebrews, who neither believed in God nor in Moses, yet went out of Egypt for the promised land when they, as it were, were forced along together with the others, so too, many Christians go out unwillingly together with my chosen men since they do not trust in my power to heal them. They do not believe in my words and they have a false hope in my power. Nevertheless, my words shall be fulfilled without their will and shall be, as it were, forced along to fulfillment until they get to the place that pleases me.”

Book 2

The Son's instruction to the bride about the devil; the Son's answer to the bride about why he does not remove evildoers before they fall into sin; and about how the kingdom of heaven is given to baptized persons who die before reaching the age of discretion.

Chapter 1

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "When the devil tempts you, tell him these three things: 'The words of God cannot be anything but true.' Second: 'Nothing is impossible for God, because he can do all things.' Third: 'You, devil, could not give me so great a fervor of love as that which God gives me.' " Again the Lord spoke to the bride, saying: "I look at people in three ways: first, their outer body and what condition it is in; second, their inner conscience, what it tends toward and in what way; third, their heart and what it desires. Like a bird that sees a fish in the sea and assesses the depth of the water and also takes note of storm winds, I, too, know and assess the ways of each person and take note of what is due to each, for I am keener of sight and can assess the human situation better than a person knows his own self.

Therefore, because I see and know all things, you might ask me why I do not take evildoers away before they fall into the depths of sin. I myself asked the question and I myself will answer it for you: I am the Creator of all things, and all things are foreknown to me. I know and see all that has been and all that will be. But, although I know and can do all things, still, for reasons of justice, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the inclination of the soul. Each human being continues in existence according to the natural constitution of the body such as it is and was from all eternity in my foreknowledge. The fact that one person has a longer life and another a shorter has to do with natural strength or weakness and is related to a person's physical constitution. It is not due to my foreknowledge that one person loses his sight or another becomes lame or something like that, since my foreknowledge of all

things is such that no one is the worse for it, nor is it harmful to anyone.

Moreover, these things do not occur because of the course and position of the heavenly elements, but due to some hidden principle of justice in the constitution and conservation of nature. For sin and natural disorder bring about the deformity of the body in many ways. This does not happen because I will it directly, but because I permit it to happen for the sake of justice. Even though I can do all things, still I do not obstruct justice. Accordingly, the length or brevity of a person's life is related to the weakness or strength of his physical constitution such as it was in my foreknowledge that no one can contravene.

You can understand this by way of a simile. Imagine that there were two roads with one road leading up to them. There were a great many graves in both roads, crossing and overlapping one another. The end of one of the two roads dropped directly downward; the end of the other tended upward. At the crossroads was written: 'Whoever travels this road begins it in physical pleasure and delight and ends it in great wretchedness and shame. Whoever takes the other road begins it in moderate and endurable exertion but reaches the end in great joy and consolation.' A person walking along on the single road was completely blind. However, when he reached the crossroads, his eyes were opened, and he saw what was written about how the two roads ended.

While he was studying the sign and thinking it over to himself, there suddenly appeared next to him two men who were entrusted with guarding the two roads. As they observed the wayfarer at the crossroads, they said to each other: 'Let us carefully observe which road he chooses to take and then he will belong to that one of us whose road he selects.' The wayfarer, however, was considering to himself the ends and advantages of each road. He made the prudent decision of selecting the road whose beginning involved some pain but had joy at the end, rather than the road that began in joy but ended in pain. He decided that it was more sensible and endurable to get tired from a little exertion at the start but rest in safety at the end.

Do you understand what all this means? I shall tell you. These two roads are the good and the evil within human reach. It lies within a person's power and free will to choose whatever he or she likes upon reaching the age of discretion. A single road leads up to the two roads of the choice between good and evil; in other words, the time of childhood leads up to the age of discretion. The man walking on this first road is like a blind man because he is, as it were, blind from his childhood up until he reaches the age of discretion, not knowing how to distinguish between good and evil, between sin and virtue, between what is commanded and what is forbidden.

The man walking on this first road, that is, in the age of boyhood, is like a blind man. However, when he reaches the crossroads, that is, the age of discretion, the eyes of his understanding are opened. He then knows how to decide whether it is better to experience a little pain but eternal joy or a little joy and eternal pain. Whichever road he chooses, he will not lack those who carefully count his steps. There are many graves on these roads, one after the other, one over against the other, because, both in youth and in old age, one person may die earlier, another later, one in youth, another in old age. The end of this life is fittingly symbolized by graves: it will come to everyone, one in this way, another in that, according to each one's natural constitution and exactly as I have foreknown it.

If I took anyone away against the body's natural constitution, the devil would have grounds of accusation against me. Accordingly, in order that the devil might not find anything in me that goes against justice in the least, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul. But consider my goodness and mercy! For, as the teacher says, I give virtue to those who do not have any virtue. By reason of my great love I give the kingdom of heaven to all of the baptized who die before reaching the age of discretion. As it is written: It has pleased my Father to give the kingdom of heaven to such as these. By reason of my tender love, I even show mercy to the infants of pagans.

If any of them die before reaching the age of discretion, given that they cannot come to know me face to face, they go instead to a place that it is not permitted for you to know but where they will live without suffering. Those who have advanced from the one road reach those two roads, that is, the age of discretion between good and evil. It is then in their power to choose what pleases them most. Their reward will follow the inclination of their will, since by that time they know how to read the sign written at the crossroads telling them that it is better to experience a little pain at the start and joy ready and waiting for them than experience joy at the start and pain at the end. Sometimes it does happen that people are taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would normally allow, for example, through homicide, drunkenness, and things of that kind.

This is because the devil's wickedness is such that the sinner in this case would receive an extremely long-lasting punishment if he were to continue in the world for any great length of time. Therefore, some people are taken away earlier than their natural physical condition would allow due to the demands of justice and because of their sins. Their removal has been foreknown to me from all eternity, and it is impossible for anyone to contravene my foreknowledge. Sometimes good people are also taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would allow. Because of the great love I have toward them, and because of their burning love and their efforts to discipline the body for my sake, justice sometimes requires that they be taken away, as foreknown to me from all eternity. Thus, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul.”

The Son's indictment of a certain soul who was to be condemned in the presence of the bride, and Christ's answer to the devil about why he permitted this soul and permits other evildoers to touch and take or receive his own true body.

Chapter 2

God appeared angry and said: "This work of my hands, whom I destined for great glory, holds me in much contempt. This soul, to whom I offered all my loving care, did three things to me: He averted his eyes from me and turned them toward the enemy. He fixed his will on the world. He put his confidence in himself, because he was free to sin against me. For this reason, because he did not bother to have any regard for me, I brought my sudden justice upon him. Because he had fixed his will against me and put false confidence in himself, I took away from him the object of his desire." Then a devil cried out, saying: "Judge, this soul is mine." The Judge answered: "What grounds do you bring against him?" He answered: "My accusation is the statement in your own indictment that he despised you, his Creator, and because of that his soul has become my handmaid.

Besides, since he was suddenly taken away, how could he suddenly begin to please you? For, when he was of sound body and living in the world, he did not serve you with a sincere heart, since he loved created things more fervently, nor did he bear illness patiently or reflect on your works as he ought to have. In the end he was not burning with the fire of charity. He is mine because you have taken him away suddenly."

The Judge answered: "A sudden end does not condemn a soul, unless there is inconsistency in her actions. A person's will is not condemned forever without careful deliberation." Then the Mother of God came and said: "My Son, if a lazy servant has a friend who is on intimate terms with his master, should not his intimate friend come to his aid? Should he not be saved, if he asks for it, for the sake of the other?" The Judge answered: "Every act of justice should be accompanied by mercy and wisdom - mercy with respect to remitting severity, wisdom to ensure that equity is maintained. But if the transgression is of such a kind as not to deserve remission, the sentence can still be mitigated for the sake of friendship with out infringing justice. Then his Mother said: "My blessed Son, this soul had me constantly in mind and showed me reverence and was often moved to celebrate the great solemnity for my sake, even though he was cold toward you. So, have mercy on him!"

The Son answered: "Blessed Mother, you know and see all things in me. Even though this soul kept you in mind, he did so more for the sake of his temporary than his spiritual welfare. He did not treat my most pure body as he should have. His foul mouth kept him from enjoying my charity. Worldly love and dissolution hid my suffering from him. His taking my pardon too much for granted and not thinking about his end accelerated his death. Although he received me continuously, it did not improve him much, because he did not prepare himself properly. A person who wishes to receive his noble Lord and guest should not only get the guest room ready but also all the utensils. This man did not do so, since, although he cleaned the house, he did not sweep it reverently with care. He did not strew the floor with the flowers of his virtues or fill the utensils of his limbs with abstinence. Therefore, you see well enough that what must be done to him is what he deserves.

Although I may be invulnerable and beyond comprehension and am everywhere by reason of my divinity, my delight is in the pure, even if I enter the good and the damned alike. The good receive my body, which was crucified and ascended into heaven, which was prefigured by the manna and by the widow's flour. The wicked do so likewise, but, whereas for the good it leads to greater strength and consolation, for the wicked it leads to an even more just condemnation, inasmuch as they, in their unworthiness, are not afraid to approach so worthy a sacrament." The devil answered: "If he approached you unworthily and his sentence was made stricter because of this, why did you permit him to approach you and touch you despite his unworthiness?"

The Judge answered: "You are not asking this out of love, since you have none, but my power compels you to ask it for the sake of this bride of mine who is listening. In the same way in which both the good and bad handled me in my human nature in order to prove the reality of my human nature as well as my patient humility, so too good and wicked alike eat me at the altar - the good unto their greater perfection, the bad in order that they may not believe themselves to be already damned and so that, having received my body, they might be converted, provided they decide to reform their intention. What

greater love can I show them than that I, the most pure, will enter even the impurest of vessels (although like the material sun I cannot be defiled by anything)? You and your comrades despise this love, for you have hardened yourselves against love.”

Then the Mother spoke again: ”My good Son, whenever he approached you, he was still reverent toward you, though not as he should have been. He also repents of having offended you, though not perfectly. My Son, for my sake, consider this to his advantage.” The Son answered: ”As the prophet said, I am the true sun, although I am far better than the material sun. The material sun does not penetrate mountains or minds, but I can do both.

A mountain can stand in the way of the material sun with the result that the sunlight does not reach the land nearby, but what can stand in my way except the sinfulness that prevents this soul from being affected by my love? Even if a part of the mountain were removed, the neighboring land would still not receive the warmth of the sun. And if I were to enter into one part of a pure mind, what consolation would it be to me if I could smell a stench from another part? Therefore, one should get rid of everything that is dirty, and then sweet enjoyment will follow upon beautiful cleanliness.” His Mother answered: ”May your will be done with all mercy!”

EXPLANATION

This was a priest who had often received warnings regarding his incontinent behavior and who did not want to listen to reason. One day when he went out to the meadow to groom his horse, there came thunder and lightning that struck and killed him. His whole body was left unscathed except for his private parts, which could be seen to be completely burned. Then the Spirit of God said: ”Daughter, those who get themselves entangled in such wretched pleasures deserve to suffer in their souls what this man suffered in his body.”

Words of amazement from the Mother of God to the bride, and about five houses in the world whose inhabitants represent five states of people, namely unfaithful

Christians, obstinate Jews and pagans separately, Jews and Pagans together, and the friends of God. This chapter contains many useful remarks.

Chapter 3

Mary said: "It is a terrible thing that the Lord of all things and the King of glory is despised. He was like a pilgrim on earth, wandering from place to place, knocking on many doors, like a wayfarer seeking welcome. The world was like an estate that had five houses. When my Son came dressed as a pilgrim to the first house, he knocked on the door and said: 'Friend, open up and let me enter to rest and stay with you, so that the wild animals do not harm me, so that storm-showers and rain may not fall upon me! Give me some of your clothes to warm me from the cold, to cover me in my nakedness! Give me some of your food to refresh me in my hunger and something to drink to revive me. You will receive a reward from your God!'

The person inside answered: 'You are far too impatient, so you are unable to live with us peaceably. You are far too tall. For that reason we are unable to clothe you. You are far too greedy and gluttonous, so we are unable to satisfy you, for there is no end to your greedy appetite.' Christ the pilgrim responded from outside: 'Friend, let me in cheerfully and voluntarily. I do not need much room. Give me some of your clothes, since there are no clothes in your house so small that they will not be able to offer me at least some warmth! Give me some of your food, since even a tiny morsel can satisfy me and a mere drop of water will refresh and strengthen me.' The person inside replied: 'We know you well enough.

You are humble in speech but importunate in your requests. You seem easily contented but are in fact insatiable when it comes to having your fill. You are far too cold and hard to clothe. Go away, I will not take you in!' Then he came to the second house and said: 'Friend, open up and look at me! I will give you what you need. I will defend you from your enemies.' The person inside answered: 'My eyes are weak. It would hurt them to look at you. I have plenty of everything and I have no need of anything of yours. I am strong and

powerful. Who can harm me?' Coming, then, to the third house, he said: 'Friend, lend me your ears and hear me! Stretch forth your hands and take hold of me! Open your mouth and taste me!'

The inhabitant of the house answered: 'Shout louder so I can hear you better! If you are nice, I will draw you to myself. If you are pleasant, I will let you in.' Then he went to the fourth house whose door was about half-open. He said: 'Friend, if you were to consider that your time has been uselessly spent, you would take me in. If you were to understand and to listen to what I have done for you, you would have compassion on me. If you paid heed to how much you have offended me, you would sigh and beg for forgiveness.' The man answered: 'We are nearly dead from waiting and longing for you. Have compassion on our wretchedness and we will be most ready to give ourselves to you. Behold our misery and look on the anguish of our body, and we will be ready for your every wish.' Then he came to the fifth house, which was completely open. He said: 'Friend, I would gladly enter here, but know that I seek a softer resting-place than that provided by a feather-bed, a greater warmth than can be had from wool, a fresher food than fresh animal meat can offer.'

Those who were inside answered: 'We have hammers lying here at our feet. We will gladly use them to shatter our feet and legs, and we will give you the marrow flowing from them to be your resting-place. We will gladly open up our inmost parts and entrails for you. Come right in! There is nothing softer than our marrow for you to rest upon, and nothing better than our inmost parts to warm you. Our heart is fresher than the fresh meat of animals. We shall be happy to cut it up for your food. Just come in! For you are sweet to taste and wonderful to enjoy!' The inhabitants of these five houses represent five different states of people in the world. The first are the unfaithful Christians who call my Son's sentences unjust, his promises false, and his commandments unbearable.

These are the ones who in their thoughts and in their minds and in their blasphemy say to my Son's preachers: 'Almighty he may well be, but he is far away and cannot be reached. He is high and wide and cannot be clothed. He is insatiable and cannot be fed. He is most

impatient and there is no getting along with him.' They say he is far away because they are weak in good deeds and charity and do not try to rise up to his goodness. They say he is wide, because their own greediness knows no limit: they are always pretending they lack or need something and are always imagining problems before they come. They also charge him with being insatiable, because heaven and earth are not enough for him, but he demands even greater gifts from mankind.

They think it foolish to give up everything for the sake of their soul in accordance with the precept, and harmful to give the body less. They say he is impatient, because he hates vice and sends them things against their will. They think nothing is fine and useful except that which the pleasure of the body suggests to them. Of course, my Son is indeed almighty in heaven and on earth, the Creator of all things and created by none, existing prior to everything, after whom no one is to come. He is indeed farthest away and widest and highest, within and without and above all things.

Yet although he is so powerful, still in his love he wants to be clothed with human help - he who has no need of clothing, who clothes all things and is himself clothed eternally and unchangeably in perpetual honor and glory. He, who is the bread of angels and of men, who feeds all things and himself needs nothing, wants to be fed with human love. He who is the restorer and author of peace asks for peace from men. Therefore, whoever wants to welcome him in a cheerful mind can satisfy him with even a morsel of bread, so long as his intention is good. He can clothe him with a single thread, so long as his love is burning. A single drop can still his thirst, provided a person has the right dispositions.

So long as a person's devotion is fervent and steadfast, he is capable of welcoming my Son into his heart and speaking with him. God is spirit and, for that reason, he has willed to transform creatures of flesh into spiritual beings and ephemeral beings into eternal ones. He thinks that whatever happens to the members of his body also happens to himself. He takes into account not only a person's work or abilities, but also the fervor of his will and the intention with which a

work is carried out. In truth, the more my Son cries out to these people through hidden inspirations, and the more he admonishes them through his preachers, the more they harden their will against him.

They do not listen or open the door of their will to him or let him in by means of charitable acts. Therefore, when their time comes, the falsehood they rely on will be annihilated, truth will be exalted, and the glory of God made manifest. The second ones are obstinate Jews. These people seem to themselves to be reasonable in every way and they regard wisdom as being legal justice. They assert their own deeds and hold them to be more honorable than the works of others. If they hear of the things my Son has done, they hold them in contempt. If they hear his words and commandments, they react with scorn.

Worse still, they would regard themselves as sinful and unclean if they were but to hear and reflect on anything having to do with my Son and as even more wretched and miserable if they were to imitate his works. But while the winds of worldly fortune still blow upon them, they think themselves most lucky. So long as their physical forces are sound, they believe themselves to be most strong. For that reason, their hopes will come to nothing and their honor will turn into shame.

The third ones are the pagans. Some of them cry out in mockery each day: 'Who is this Christ? If he is gracious in giving present goods, we shall gladly receive him. If he is gentle in condoning sins, we shall even more gladly honor him.' But these people have closed the eyes of their mind so as not to perceive the justice and mercy of God. They stop up their ears and do not hear what my Son has done for them and for everyone. They shut their mouths and do not inquire what their future will be like or what is to their advantage. They fold their arms and refuse to make an effort to search out the way in which they might escape lies and find the truth. Therefore, since they do not want to understand or take precautions, although they can and have the time to do so, they and their house will fall and be enveloped by the tempest.

The fourth ones are those Jews and pagans who would like to be Christians, if they only knew how and in what way to please my Son and if only they had a helper. They hear from people in neighboring regions everyday, and also know from the appeals of love within themselves, as well as from other signs, how much my Son has done and suffered for everyone. This is why they cry out to him in their conscience and say:

'O Lord, we have heard that you promised to give yourself to us. So we are waiting for you. Come and fulfill your promise! We see and understand that there is no divine power in those who are worshipped as gods, no love of souls, no appreciation of chastity. We only find in them carnal motives, a love for the honors of the present world. We know about the Law and hear about the great works you have performed in mercy and justice, We hear from the sayings of your prophets that they were awaiting you whom they had foretold. So come, kind Lord! We would like to give ourselves to you, because we understand that in you there is love for souls, the right use of all things, perfect purity, and life everlasting. Come without delay and enlighten us, for we are nearly dead from waiting for you!' That is how they cry out to my Son. This explains why their door is half-open, because their intention is complete with respect to the good, but they have not yet attained its fulfillment. These are people who deserve to have the grace and consolation of my Son.

In the fifth house are the friends of my Son and me. The door of their mind is completely open for my Son. They are glad to hear him calling. They not only open when he knocks but joyfully run to meet him as he comes in. With the hammers of the divine precepts they shatter anything they find distorted in themselves. They prepare a resting-place for my Son, not out of the feathers of birds but out of the harmony of the virtues and the curbing of evil affections, which is the very marrow of all the virtues. They offer my Son a kind of warmth that does not come from wool but from a love so fervent that they not only give their belongings to him but their very selves as well. They also prepare food for him that is fresher than any meat: it is their perfect heart that does not desire or love anything but its God.

The Lord of Heaven dwells in their hearts, and God who nourishes all things is sweetly nourished by their charity. They keep their eyes continually on the door lest the enemy enter, they keep their ears turned toward the Lord, and their hands ready for doing battle against the enemy. Imitate them, my daughter, as far as you are able, because their foundation is built on solid rock. The other houses have their foundations in mud, which is why they will be shaken when the wind comes.”

The words of the Mother of God to her Son on behalf of his bride, and about how Christ is compared to Salomon, and about the severe sentence against false Christians.

Chapter 4

The Mother of God spoke to her Son, saying: ”My Son, look how your bride is crying because you have few friends and many enemies.” The Son answered: ”It is written that the sons of the kingdom will be cast out and will not inherit the kingdom. It is likewise written that a certain queen came from far away to see the riches of Salomon and to hear his wisdom. When she saw it all, she was breathless from sheer amazement. The people of his kingdom, however, paid no attention to his wisdom nor admired his riches. I am prefigured by Solomon, although I am far richer and wiser than Solomon was, inasmuch as all wisdom comes from me and anyone who is wise gets his wisdom from me. My riches are eternal life and indescribable glory. I promised and offered these goods to Christians as to my own children, in order that they might possess them forever, if they imitated me and believed in my words. But they pay no attention to my wisdom.

They hold my deeds and my promises in scorn and regard my riches as worthless. What shall I do with them then? Surely, if the sons do not want their inheritance, then strangers, that is, pagans will receive it. Like that foreign queen, whom I take to represent faithful souls, they will come and admire the wealth of my glory and charity, so much so that they will fall away from their spirit of infidelity and

be filled with my Spirit. What, then, shall I do with the sons of the kingdom? I will deal with them in the manner of a skillful potter who, when he observes that the first object he has made out of clay is neither beautiful nor useable, throws it to the earth and crushes it. I will deal with Christians in the same way. Although they ought to be mine, since I formed them in my image and redeemed them with my blood, they have turned out to be pitifully deformed. Therefore, they will be trampled down like earth and thrown into hell.”

The Lord's words in the presence of the bride concerning his own majesty, and a wonderful parable comparing Christ to David, while Jews, bad Christians, and pagans are compared to David's three sons, and about how the church subsists in the seven sacraments.

Chapter 5

“I am God, not made of stone or wood nor created by another but the Creator of the universe, abiding without beginning or end. I am he who came into the Virgin and was with the Virgin without losing my divinity. Through my human nature I was in the Virgin while still retaining my divine nature, and I am that same person who, through my divine nature, continued to rule over heaven and earth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through my Spirit I set the Virgin on fire - not in the sense that the Spirit that set her on fire was something separate from me, but the Spirit that set her on fire was the same one who was in the Father and in me, the Son, just as the Father and the Son were in him, these three being one God, not three gods.

I am like King David who had three sons. One of them was called Absalom, and he sought the life of his father. The second, Adonijah, sought his father's kingdom. The third son, Solomon, obtained the kingdom. The first son denotes the Jews. They are the people who sought my life and death and scorned my counsel. Consequently, now that their requital is known, I can say what David said upon the death of his son: 'My son, Absalom!' that is: O my Jewish children, where is your longing and expectation now? O my children, what will be your

end now? I felt compassion for you because you longed for me to come - for me whom you learned from many signs had come - and because you longed for quickly fading glory, all of which now has faded. But I feel greater compassion for you now, like David repeating those first words over and over, because I see that you will end in a wretched death.

Therefore, again like David, I say with all my love: 'My son, who will let me die in your stead?' David knew well that he could not bring back his dead son by dying himself, but, in order to show his deep fatherly affection and the eager yearning of his will, even though he knew it was impossible, he was prepared to die in the place of his son. In the same way, I now say: O my Jewish children, although you had ill-will toward me and did as much as you could against me, if it were possible and if my Father allowed it, I would willingly die once again for you, for I take pity on the misery you have brought upon yourselves as required by justice. I told you what was to be done by my words and showed you by my example. I went ahead of you like a hen protecting you with wings of love, but you spurned it all. Therefore, all the things that you longed for have fled away. Your end is misery and all your labor wasted.

Bad Christians are denoted by David's second son who sinned against his father in his old age. He reasoned with himself in this way: 'My father is an old man and failing in strength. If I say anything wrong to him, he does not respond. If I do anything against him, he does not avenge himself. If I assail him, he endures it patiently. Therefore, I will do what I want.' With some of his father David's servants, he went up to a grove of few trees in order to play the king. But when the wisdom and intention of his father became evident, he changed his plan and those who were with him fell into discredit.

This is what Christians are doing to me now. They think to themselves: 'God's signs and decisions are not as manifest now as they were before. We can say what we like, since he is merciful and pays no attention. Let us do as we please, since he gives way easily.' They have no faith in my power, as if I were weaker now in accomplishing my will than I was before.

They imagine my love to be less, as if I am no longer as willing to have mercy on them as on their fathers. They also think that my judgment is a thing to be laughed at and that my justice is meaningless. Therefore, they, too, go up to a grove with some of David's servants in order to play the king with presumption. What does this grove of few trees denote, if not the Holy Church subsisting through the seven sacraments as through just a few trees? They enter into this church along with some of David's servants, that is, with a few good works, in order to gain God's kingdom with presumption.

They do a modest number of good works, confident that thereby, no matter what state of sin they are in or whatever sins they have committed, they can still gain the kingdom of heaven as if by hereditary right. David's son wanted to obtain the kingdom against David's will but was driven away in disgrace, inasmuch as both he and his ambition were unjust, and the kingdom was given to a better and wiser man. In the same way, these people will also be driven away from my kingdom.

It will be given to those who do the will of David, since only a person who has charity can obtain my kingdom. Only a person who is pure and is led by my heart can approach me who am the most pure of all.

Solomon was the third son of David. He represents the pagans. When Bathsheba heard that someone other than Solomon - whom David had promised would be king after him - had been elected by certain persons, she went to David and said: 'My lord, you swore to me that Solomon would be king after you. Now, however, someone else has been elected.'

If this is the case and it goes on in this way, I will end up being sentenced to the fire as an adulteress and my son will be regarded as illegitimate.' When David heard this, he stood up and said: 'I swear to God that Solomon will sit on my throne and be king after me.' He then ordered his servants to set Solomon on the throne and proclaim as king the man of David's choice. They carried out the orders of their lord and raised up Solomon to great power, and all those who had given their vote to his brother were scattered and reduced to servitude.

This Bathsheba, who would have been accounted an adulteress had another king been elected, stands for nothing other than the faith of the pagans.

No kind of adultery is worse than selling oneself into prostitution away from God and from the true faith and believing in a god other than the Creator of universe. Just as Bathsheba did, some of the Gentiles come to me with humble and contrite hearts, saying: 'Lord, you promised that in the future we would be Christians. Carry out your promise! If another king, if another faith other than yours should gain the ascendancy over us, if you remove yourself from us, we will burn in misery and die like an adulteress who has taken an adulterer instead of a lawful husband. Besides, although you live forever, nevertheless, you will die to us and we to you in the sense that you will remove your grace from our hearts and we will set ourselves up against you due to our lack of faith. Therefore, fulfill your promise and strengthen our weakness and enlighten our darkness! If you delay, if you remove yourself from us, we will perish.' Having heard this, I will stand up like David through my grace and mercy.

I swear by my divine nature, which is joined to my humanity, and by my human nature, which is in my Spirit, and by my Spirit, which is in my divine and human natures, these three being not three gods but one God, that I will fulfill my promise. I will send my friends to bring my son Solomon, that is, the pagans, into the grove, that is, into the church, which subsists through the seven sacraments as through seven trees (namely baptism, penance, the anointment of confirmation, the sacrament of the altar and of the priesthood, matrimony, and extreme unction). They will take their rest upon my throne, that is, in the true faith of the Holy Church.

Moreover, the bad Christians will become their servants. The former will find their joy in an everlasting heritage and in the sweet nourishment that I will prepare for them. The latter, however, will groan in the misery that will begin for them in the present and last forever. And so, since it is still the time for vigilance, may my friends not fall asleep, may they not grow weary, for a glorious reward awaits their toil!"

The Son's words in the presence of the bride concerning a king standing on a battlefield with friends to his right and enemies to his left, and about how the king represents Christ who has Christians to the right and pagans to the left, and about how the Christians are rejected and he sends his preachers to the pagans.

Chapter 6

The Son said: "I am like a king standing in a battlefield with friends standing to his right and enemies to his left. The voice of someone shouting came to those who stood on the right where everyone was well armed. Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned to their lord. The voice shouted to them: 'Turn to me and trust me! I have gold to give you.' When they heard this, they turned toward him. The voice spoke a second time to those who had turned around: 'If you want to see the gold, unfasten your helmets, and if you want to keep it, I will fasten your helmets on again as I wish.' When they assented, he fastened their helmets on back to front. The result was that the front part with the apertures to see through was at the back of their heads while the helmets' back part covered their eyes so that they were unable to see. Shouting like this, he led them after him like blind men.

When this had been done, some of the king's friends reported to their lord that his enemies had tricked his men. He said to his friends: 'Go out among them and cry out: Unfasten your helmets and see how you have been deceived! Turn back to me and I will welcome you in peace!' They did not want to listen, but regarded it as mockery. The servants heard this and reported it to their lord. He said: 'Well then, since they have scorned me, go quickly toward the left-hand side and tell those who stand on the left these three things: The way that leads you to life has been prepared for you. The gate is open. And the lord himself wants to come to meet you with peace. Believe therefore firmly that the way has been prepared! Have a steadfast hope that the gate is open and his words are true! Go to meet the lord with love, and he will welcome you with love and peace and lead you to everlasting

peace!' When they heard the messengers' words, they believed in them and were welcomed in peace.

I am that king. I had Christians to my right, since I had prepared an eternal reward for them. Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned toward me so long as they wholly intended to do my will, to obey my commandments, and so long as all their desire aimed at heaven. By and by the devil's voice, that is, pride, sounded in the world and showed them worldly riches and carnal pleasure. They turned toward it by yielding their assent and desires to pride. Because of pride, they took off their helmets by putting their desires into effect and preferring temporal to spiritual goods. Now that they have put aside the helmets of God's will and the weapons of virtue, pride has got such a hold of them and so bound them to itself that they are only too happy to go on sinning right to the end and would be glad to live forever, provided they could sin forever.

Pride has so blinded them that the apertures of the helmets through which they should be able to see are at the back of their heads and in front of them is darkness. What do these apertures in the helmets represent if not the consideration of the future and the provident circumspection of present realities? Through the first aperture, they should see the delight of future rewards and the horrors of future punishments as well as the awful sentence of God. Through the second aperture, they should see God's commandments and prohibitions, also how much they may have transgressed God's commandments and how they should improve. But these apertures are at the back of the head where nothing can be seen, which means that the consideration of heavenly realities has fallen into disregard.

Their love for God has grown cold, while their love for the world is considered with delight and embraced in such away that it leads them like a well-oiled wheel whither it will. However, seeing me dishonored and souls falling away and the devil gaining control, my friends cry out daily to me in their prayers for them. Their prayers have reached heaven and come to my hearing. Moved by their prayers, I have daily sent my preachers to these people and shown them signs

and increased my graces to them. But, in their scorn for it all, they have piled sin upon sin.

Therefore, I shall now say to my servants and I shall put my words most assuredly into effect: My servants, go to the left-hand side, that is, to the pagans, and say: 'The Lord of heaven and the Creator of the universe would have the following said to you: The way of heaven is open for you. Have the will to enter it with a firm faith! The gate of heaven stands open for you. Hope firmly and you will enter through it! The King of heaven and the Lord of angels will personally come out to meet you and give you everlasting peace and blessing. Go out to meet him and receive him with the faith he has revealed to you and that has made ready the way to heaven! Receive him with the hope by which you hope, for he himself has the intention of giving you the kingdom.

Love him with your whole heart and put your love into practice and you will enter through the gates of God from which those Christians were thrust away who did not want to enter them and who made themselves unworthy by their own deeds.' By my truth I declare to you that I will put my words into practice and will not forget them. I will receive you as my children and I will be your father, I, whom Christians have held in scornful scorn.

You then, my friends, who are in the world, go forth without fear and shout out loud, announce my will to them and help them to carry it out. I will be in your hearts and in your words. I will be your guide in life and your savior in death. I will not abandon you. Go forth boldly - the more the toil, the greater the glory!

I can do all things in a single instant and with a single word, but I want your reward to grow through your own efforts and my glory to grow through your bravery. Do not be surprised at what I say. If the wisest man in the world could count up how many souls fall into hell each day, they would outnumber the sands of the sea or the pebbles on the shore. This is a matter of justice, because these souls have separated themselves from their Lord and God. I am saying this so that the devil's numbers may decrease, and the danger become known,

and my army be filled up. If only they would listen and come to their senses!”

Jesus Christ speaks to the bride and compares his divine nature to a crown and uses Peter and Paul to symbolize the clerical and the lay state, and about the ways of dealing with enemies, and about the qualities that knights in the world should have.

Chapter 7

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: ”I am King of the crown. Do you know why I said 'King of the crown'? Because my divine nature was and will be and is without beginning or end. My divine nature is aptly likened to a crown, because a crown has neither starting-point nor end. Just as a crown is reserved for the future king in a kingdom, so too my divine nature was reserved for my human nature to be its crown.

I had two servants. One was a priest, the other a layman. The first was Peter who had a priestly office, while Paul was, as it were, a layman. Peter was bound in marriage, but when he saw that his marriage was not consistent with his priestly office, and considering that his upright intention might be endangered by a lack of continence, he separated himself from the otherwise licit marriage, in which he divorced himself from his wife's bed, and he devoted himself to me wholeheartedly.

Paul, however, did observe celibacy and kept himself unstained by the marriage-bed. See what great love I had for these two! I gave the keys of heaven to Peter so that whatever he bound or loosed on earth might be bound or loosed in heaven. I allowed Paul to become like Peter in glory and honor. As they were equals together on earth, so now they are united in everlasting glory in heaven and glorified together. However, although I mentioned these two expressly by name, by and through them I mean to denote other friends of mine as well. In similar fashion, under the earlier Covenant, I used to speak to

Israel as if I were addressing just one person, although I meant to designate the entire people of Israel by that one name. In the same way now, using these two men, I mean to denote the multitude of those whom I have filled with my glory and love.

With the passage of time, evils began to multiply and the flesh began to grow weaker and to be more than usually prone to evil. Therefore, I set up norms for each of the two, that is, for the clergy and laity, represented here by Peter and Paul. In my mercy I decided to allow the clergy to own a moderate amount of church property for their bodily needs in order that they might grow more fervent and constant in serving me. I also allowed the laity to join in marriage according to the rites of the church. Among the priests there was a certain good man who thought to himself: 'The flesh drags me toward base pleasure, the world drags me toward harmful sights, while the devil sets various traps to get me to sin. Therefore, in order not to be ensnared by carnal pleasure, I will observe moderation in all my actions. I will be moderate in my rest and recreation.

I will dedicate the proper time to work and prayer and restrain my carnal appetites through fasting. Second, in order that the world may not drag me away from the love of God, I will give up all worldly things, for they are all perishable. It is safer to follow Christ in poverty. Third, in order not to be deceived by the devil who is always showing us falsehoods instead of the truth, I will submit myself to the rule and obedience of another; and I will reject all selfishness and show that I am ready to undertake whatever is commanded me by the other person.' This man was the first to establish a monastic rule. He persevered in it in praiseworthy fashion and left his life as an example to be imitated by others.

For a time the class of the laity was well organized. Some of them tilled the soil and bravely persevered in working the land. Others sailed on ships and carried merchandise to other regions so that the resources of one region supplied the needs of another. Others were diligent craftsmen and artisans. Among these were the defenders of my church who are now called knights.

They took up arms as avengers of the Holy Church in order to do battle against her enemies. There appeared among them a good man and friend of mine who thought to himself: 'I do not till the soil as a farmer. I do not toil on the seas as a merchant. I do not work with my hands as a skilled craftsman.

What, then, can I do or with what works can I please my God? I am not energetic enough in the service of the church. My body is too soft and weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down enemies, and my mind grows uneasy in pondering the things of heaven. What can I do then?

I know what I can do. I will go and bind myself by a stable oath to a secular prince, swearing to defend the faith of the Holy Church with my strength and with my blood.' That friend of mine went to the prince and said: 'My lord, I am one of the defenders of the church. My body is all too weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down others; my mind is unstable when it comes to thinking about and carrying out what is good; my self-will is what pleases me; and my need for rest does not let me take a strong stance for the house of God. I bind myself therefore with a public oath of obedience to the Holy Church and to you, o Prince, swearing to defend her all the days of my life in order that, although my mind and will may be lukewarm with respect to the struggle, I can be held and compelled to toil because of my oath.' The prince answered him: 'I will go with you to the house of the Lord and be a witness to your oath and your promise.' Both of them came up to my altar, and my friend genuflected and said: 'I am too weak of body to bear physical injuries, my self-will is all too pleasing to me, my hands are too lukewarm when it comes to striking blows.

Therefore, I now pledge obedience to God and to you, my chief, binding myself by an oath to defend the Holy Church against her enemies, to comfort the friends of God, to do good to widows, orphans, and God's faithful, and never to do anything contrary to God's church or the faith. Moreover, I will submit myself to your correction, if I should happen to err, in order that, bound by obedience, I might fear sin and selfishness all the more and apply myself more fervently and readily to carrying out God's will and your own will,

knowing myself to be only the more worthy of condemnation and contempt if I should presume to violate obedience and transgress your commands.' After this profession had been made at my altar, the prince wisely decided that the man should dress differently than other laymen as a sign of his self-renouncement and as a reminder to him that he had a superior to whom he had to submit.

The prince also placed a sword in his hand, saying: 'This sword is for you to use to threaten and slay the enemies of God.' He placed a shield on his arm, saying: 'Defend yourself with this shield against the missiles of the enemy and patiently endure whatever is thrown against it. May you sooner see it shattered than run away from battle!' In the presence of my priest who was listening, my friend made the firm promise to observe all of this. When he had made his promise, the priest gave him my body to provide him strength and fortitude so that, once united with me through my body, my friend might never be separated from me. Such was my friend George as well as many others. Such, too, should the knights be. They should get to hold their title as a result of merit and to wear their knightly attire as a result of their actions in defense of the Holy Faith.

Hear how my enemies are now going against the earlier deeds of my friends. My friends used to enter the monastery out of their wise reverence and love for God. But those who are in monasteries nowadays go out into the world because of pride and greed, following self-will, fulfilling the pleasure of their bodies. Justice demands that people who die in such a disposition should not experience the joy of heaven but rather obtain the endless punishment of hell. Know, too, that the cloistered monks who are forced against their will to become prelates out of love for God are not to be counted among their number. The knights who used to bear my arms were ready to lay down their lives for justice and shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith, bringing justice to the needy, putting down and humbling the doers of evil.

But hear how they have now been corrupted! Now they would rather die in battle for the sake of pride, greed, and envy at the promptings of the devil instead of living after my commandments and

obtaining eternal joy. Just wages will therefore be dealt out at the judgment to all the people who die in such a disposition, and their souls will be yoked to the devil forever. But the knights who serve me will receive their due wages in the heavenly host forever. I, Jesus Christ, true God and man, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, have said this.”

Christ's words to the bride about a certain knight's desertion from the true army, that is, from humility, obedience, patience, faith, etc., to the false one, that is, to the opposing vices, pride, etc., and the description of his condemnation, and about how one can meet with condemnation because of an evil will just as much as because of evil deeds.

Chapter 8

“I am the true Lord. There is no other lord greater than I. There was no lord before me nor will there be any after me. All lordship comes from me and through me. This is why I am the true Lord and why no one but I alone can truly be called Lord, for all power comes from me.

I was telling you earlier that I had two servants, one of whom manfully took up a praiseworthy way of life and kept at it manfully to the end. Countless others followed him in that same way of knightly service. I will now tell you about the first man to desert the profession of knighthood as instituted by my friend. I will not tell you his name, because you do not know him by name, but I will disclose his purpose and desire.

A man who wanted to become a knight came to my sanctuary. When he went in, he heard a voice: 'Three things are necessary if you want to be a knight: First, you must believe that the bread you see on the altar is true God and true man, the Creator of heaven and earth. Second, once you take up your knightly service, you must exercise more self-restraint than you were accustomed to doing before. Third,

you should not care about worldly honor. Rather I will give you divine joy and everlasting honor.

Hearing this and pondering these three things to himself, he heard an evil voice in his mind making three proposals contrary to the first three. It said: 'If you serve me, I will make you three other proposals. I will let you take what you see, hear what you like, and obtain what you desire.' When he heard this, he thought to himself: 'The first lord bade me to have faith in something I do not see and promised me things unknown to me. He bade me abstain from the delights that I can see, and that I desire, and to hope for things of which I am uncertain. The other lord promised me the worldly honor that I can see and the pleasure that I desire without forbidding me to hear or see the things I like.

Surely, it is better for me to follow him and to have what I see and to enjoy the things that are sure rather than to hope for things of which I am uncertain.' With thoughts such as these, this man was the first to commence the desertion from the service of a true knight. He rejected the true profession and broke his promise. He threw down the shield of patience at my feet and let the sword for the defense of the faith drop from his hands and left the sanctuary. The evil voice told him: 'If, as I said, you would be mine, then you should walk proudly in the fields and streets. That other Lord commands his men to be constantly humble. Therefore, be sure not to avoid any sign of pride and ostentation! While that other Lord made his entrance in obedience and subjected himself to obedience in every way, you should let no one be your superior. Bend not your neck in humility to another. Take up your sword to shed the blood of your neighbor and brother in order to acquire his property!

Strap the shield to your arm and risk your life for the sake of winning renown! Instead of the faith that he holds out, give your love to the temple of your own body without abstaining from any of the pleasures that delight you.' While the man was making up his mind and strengthening his resolve with such thoughts, his prince laid his hand on the man's neck in the appointed place. No place whatsoever can harm anyone who has a good will or help anyone whose intention

is wicked. After the confirmation of his knighthood, the wretch betrayed his knightly service, exercising it only with a view to worldly pride, making light of the fact that he was now under a greater obligation to live an austere life than before. Countless armies of knights imitated and still imitate this knight in his pride, and he has sunk all the deeper into the abyss due to his knightly vows.

But, given that there are many people who want to rise in the world and achieve renown but do not manage to do so, you might ask: Are these people to be punished for the wickedness of their intentions as much as those who achieve their desired success? To this I answer you: I assure you that anyone who fully intends to rise in the world and does all he can to do so in order to gain an empty title of worldly honor, although his intention never achieves its effect due to some secret decision of mine, such a man will be punished for the wickedness of his intention just as much as the one who does manage to achieve it, that is, unless he rectifies his intention through penance.

Look, I will put to you the example of two persons known well enough to many people. One of them prospered according to his wishes and obtained almost everything he desired. The other had the same intention, but not the same possibilities. The first one obtained worldly renown; he loved the temple of his body in its every lust; he had the power he wanted; everything he put his hand to prospered. The other was identical to him in intention but received less renown. He would willingly have shed his neighbor's blood a hundred times over in order to be able to realize his plans of greed.

He did what he could and carried out his will in accordance with his desire. These two were alike in their horrible punishment. Although they did not die at exactly the same time, I can still speak of one soul rather than two, since their condemnation was one and the same. Both had the same thing to say when body and soul were separated and the soul departed. Once having left the body, the soul said to it: 'Tell me, where now are the sights to delight my eyes that you promised me, where is the pleasure you showed me, where are the pleasant words that you bade me use?' The devil was there and answered:

'The promised sights are no more than dust, the words are but air, the pleasure is but mud and rot. Those things are of no value to you now.' The soul exclaimed then: 'Alas, alas, I have been wretchedly deceived! I see three things.

I see him who was promised to me under the semblance of bread. He is the very King of kings and Lord of lords. I see what he promised, and it is indescribable and inconceivable. I hear now that the abstinence he recommended was really most useful.' Then, in an even louder voice, the soul cried out 'woe' three times: 'Woe is me that ever I was born! Woe is me that my life on the earth was so long! Woe is me that I shall live in a perpetual and neverending death!'

Behold what wretchedness the wretched will have in return for their contempt of God and their fleeting joy! You should therefore thank me, my bride, for having called you away from such wretchedness! Be obedient to my Spirit and to my chosen ones!"

Christ's words to the bride giving an explanation of the immediately preceding chapter, and about the devil's attack on the aforementioned knight, and about his terrible and just condemnation.

Chapter 9

"The entire span of this life is but as a single hour for me. Therefore, what I am telling you now has always been in my foreknowledge. I told you before about a man who began the true knighthood, and about another who deserted it like a scoundrel. The man who deserted from the ranks of true knights threw down his shield at my feet and his sword at my side by breaking his sacred promises and vows. The shield he threw down symbolizes nothing other than the upright faith by which he was to defend himself against the enemies of the faith and of his soul.

The feet, on which I walk toward humanity, symbolize nothing other than the divine delight by which I attract a person to myself and the patience by which I patiently bear with him. He threw this shield down when he entered my sanctuary, thinking to himself: I want to obey the lord who counseled me not to practice abstinence, the one who gives me what I desire and lets me hear things pleasant to my ears. This was how he threw down the shield of my faith by wanting to follow his own selfish desire rather than me, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

If he had had an upright faith, if he had believed me to be almighty and a just judge and the giver of eternal glory, he would not have wished for anything but me, he would not have feared anything but me. But he threw down my faith at my feet, despising it and counting it for nothing, because he did not seek to please me and had no regard for my patience. Then he threw down his sword at my side. The sword denotes nothing other than the fear of God, which God's true knight should continuously have in his hands, that is, in his acts. My side symbolizes nothing other than the care and protection with which I shelter and defend my children, like a mother hen sheltering her chicks, so that the devil does not harm them and no unendurable trials come upon them.

But that man threw away the sword of my fear by not bothering to think about my power and by not having any regard for my love and patience.

He threw it down at my side as if to say: 'I neither fear nor care about your defense. I got what I have by my own doing and my noble birth.' He broke the promise he made to me. What is the true promise that a man is bound to vow to God? Surely, it is deeds of love: that whatever a person does, he should do out of love for God. But this he set aside by twisting his love for God toward self-love; he preferred his selfishness to future and eternal delight.

In this way he separated himself from me and left the sanctuary of my humility. The body of any Christian ruled by humility is my sanctuary. Those ruled by pride are not my sanctuary but the sanctuary of the devil who steers them toward worldly desire after his own

purposes. Having gone out of the temple of my humility, and having rejected the shield of holy faith and the sword of fear, he walked out proudly to the fields, cultivating every selfish lust and desire, scorning to fear me and growing in sin and lust.

When he reached the final end of his life and his soul had left the body, the demons charged out to meet him. Three voices from hell could be heard speaking against him. The first said: 'Is not this the man who deserted from humility and followed us in pride? If his two feet could take him up even higher in pride so as to surpass us and hold the primacy in pride, he would be quick to do so.' The soul answered him: 'I am the one.' Justice answered him: 'This is the reward of your pride: you will descend handed by one demon down to the next until you reach the lowest part of hell. And given that there was no demon who did not know his own particular punishment and the torment to be inflicted for every useless thought and deed, neither will you escape punishment at the hands of any one of them but share in the malice and evil of them all.' The second voice cried out saying: 'Is not this the man who separated himself from his professed service to God and joined our ranks instead?'

The soul answered: 'I am the one.' And Justice said: 'This is your allotted reward: that everyone who imitates your conduct as a knight will add to your punishment and sorrow by his own corruption and pain and will strike you at his coming as though with a deadly wound. You will be like a man afflicted by a severe wound, indeed like one afflicted by wound upon wound until his whole body is full of wounds, who endures intolerable suffering and bewails his fate constantly. Even so, you will experience misery upon misery. At the height of your pain, your pain will be renewed, and your punishment will never end and your woes will never decrease.' The third voice cried out: 'Is not this the man who exchanged his Creator for creatures, the love of his Creator for his own selfishness?' Justice answered: 'It certainly is.

Therefore, two holes will be opened in him. Through the first there will enter into him every punishment earned for his least sin up to his greatest, inasmuch as he exchanged his Creator for his own lust.

Through the second there will enter into him every kind of pain and shame, and no divine consolation or charity will ever come to him, inasmuch as he loved himself rather than his Creator. His life will last forever and his punishment will last forever, for all the saints have turned away from him.' My bride, see how miserable those people will be who despise me and how great will be the pain they purchase at the price of so little pleasure!"

As God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Christ speaks to the bride about how the devil is symbolized by Pharaoh, present-day knights by the people of Israel, and the Virgin's body by the bush, and about how present-day knights and bishops are, at present, preparing a home for the devil.

Chapter 10

"It is written in the law of Moses that Moses was watching over the flocks in the desert when he saw a bush that was on fire without being burned up, and he became afraid and covered his face. A voice spoke to him from the bush: 'I have heard of my people's suffering and feel pity for them, for they are oppressed in harsh slavery.' I who am now speaking with you am that voice heard from the bush. I have heard the misery of my people. Who were my people if not Israel? Using this same name I now designate the knights in the world who have taken the vows of my knighthood and who should be mine but are being attacked by the devil.

What did Pharaoh do to my people Israel in Egypt? Three things. First, when they were building his walls, they were not to be helped by those gatherers of straw who earlier had helped them in making bricks. Instead, they had to go themselves and gather the straw wherever they could throughout the entire country. Second, the builders did not get any thanks for their labor, despite their producing the number of bricks set them as a goal. Third, the foremen beat them harshly whenever they fell short of their normal production. In the midst of their great affliction, this people of mine built two cities for pharaoh.

This pharaoh is none another than the devil who attacks my people, that is, the knights, who ought be my people. Truly I tell you that if the knights had kept the arrangement and rule established by my first friend, they would have been among my dearest friends. Just as Abraham, who was the first to be given the commandment of circumcision and was obedient to me, became my dearest friend, and anyone who imitated Abraham's faith and works shared in his love and glory, so too the knights were especially pleasing to me among all the orders, since they promised to shed for me that which they held most dear, their own blood. By this vow they made themselves most pleasing to me, just as Abraham did in the matter of circumcision, and they purified themselves daily by living up to their profession and by taking up the practice of holy charity.

These knights are now so oppressed by their wretched slavery under the devil that the devil is wounding them with a lethal wound and throwing them into pain and suffering. The bishops of the church are building two cities for him just like the children of Israel. The first city stands for physical toil and meaningless anxiety over the acquisition of worldly goods. The second city stands for spiritual unrest and distress, inasmuch as they are never allowed to rest from worldly desire. There is toil on the outside and restlessness and anxiety on the inside, rendering spiritual things a burden.

Just as Pharaoh did not supply my people with the things necessary for making bricks or give them fields full of grain, or wine and other useful things, but the people had to go and find them for themselves in sorrow and tribulation of heart, so the devil deals likewise with them now. Although they toil for and covet the world with their inmost heart, they are still unable to fulfill their desire and sate the thirst of their greed. They are consumed on the inside with sorrow and on the outside with toil. For that reason, I pity them their sufferings, because my knights, my people, are building homes for the devil and toiling ceaselessly, because they cannot get what they desire, and because they worry themselves over meaningless goods, although the fruit of their anxiety is not a blessing but rather the reward of shame.

When Moses was sent to the people, God gave him a miraculous sign for three reasons. First, it was because each person in Egypt worshipped his own individual god, and because there were innumerable beings who were said to be gods. Therefore it was fitting that there should be a miraculous sign so that, through it and by the power of God, people would believe that there was one God and one Creator of all things because of the signs, and so that all the idols would be proved worthless. Second, a sign was also given to Moses as a symbol prefiguring my future body. What did the burning bush that was not consumed symbolize if not the Virgin who conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth without corruption? From this bush I came forth, assuming a human nature from the virginal body of Mary. Similarly, the serpent given as a sign to Moses symbolized my body. In the third place, a sign was given to Moses in order to confirm the truth of coming events and to prefigure the miraculous signs to be done in the future, proving the truth of God to be so much the truer and more certain the more clearly those things signified by the signs were in time fulfilled.

I am now sending my words to the children of Israel, that is, to the knights. They need no miraculous signs for three reasons. This is, first of all, because the one God and Creator of all things is already worshipped and known through Holy Scripture as well as through many signs. Second, they are not now waiting for me to be born, because they know that I was truly born and became incarnate without corruption, inasmuch as scripture has been completely fulfilled. And there is no better or more certain faith to be held and believed than the one that has already been preached by me and by my holy preachers. Nevertheless, I have done three things through you by which it may be believed. First, these are my true words and do not differ from the true faith.

Second, a demon went out of a possessed man at my word. Third, I gave a certain man the power to unite mistrustful hearts in mutual charity. Therefore, do not have any doubts about those who will believe in me. Those who believe in me believe also in my words.

Those who savor me savor also my words. It is written that Moses covered his face after speaking with God.

You, however, do not need to cover your face. I opened your spiritual eyes so that you might see spiritual things. I opened your ears so that you might hear the things that are of the Spirit. I will show you a likeness of my body as it was during and before my passion, and such as it was after the resurrection, as Magdalene and Peter and others saw it. You will also hear my voice as it spoke to Moses from within the bush. This same voice is now speaking within your soul.”

Christ's delightful words to the bride about the glory and honor of the good and true knight, and about how the angels come out to meet him, and about how the glorious Trinity welcomes him affectionately and takes him to a place of indescribable rest as a reward for but a little struggle.

Chapter 11

“I told you before about the end and punishment of that knight who was the first to desert from the knightly service he had promised me. I will now describe for you by way of metaphors (for otherwise you are unable to understand spiritual things) the glory and honor of him who first manfully took up the true knightly service and manfully kept at it to the end. When this friend of mine came to the end of his life and his soul left his body, five legions of angels were sent to greet him. Along with them there also came a multitude of demons in order to find out if they could lay any claim to him, for they are full of malice and never rest from malice.

A bright clear voice was then heard in heaven, saying: 'My Lord and Father, is not this the man who bound himself to your will and carried it out to perfection?' The man himself then answered in his own conscience: 'Indeed I am.' Three voices were then heard. The first was that of the divine nature, which said: 'Did I not create you and give you a body and soul? You are my son and you have done your Father's will. Come to me, your almighty Creator and dear Father! An

eternal inheritance is owed to you, for you are a son. Your Father's inheritance is owed to you, for you have been obedient to him.

So, dear son, come to me then! I will welcome you with joy and honor.' The second voice was that of the human nature, which said: 'Brother, come to your brother! I offered myself for you in battle and shed my blood for you. You, who obeyed my will, come to me! You, who paid blood for blood and were prepared to offer death for death and life for life, come to me! You, who imitated me in your life, enter now into my life and into my neverending joy! I recognize you as my true brother.' The third voice was that of the Spirit (but the three are one God, not three gods) that said: 'Come, my knight, you whose interior life was so attractive that I longed to dwell with you!

In your exterior conduct you were so manly that you deserved my protection. Enter, then, into rest in return for all your physical troubles! In return for your mental suffering, enter into a consolation beyond description! In return for your charity and your manly struggles, come into me and I will dwell in you and you in me! Come to me, then, my excellent knight, who never yearned for anything but me! Come and you will be filled with holy pleasure!' Afterward five voices were heard from each of the five legions of angels.

The first one spoke, saying: 'Let us march ahead of this excellent knight and carry his weapons ahead of him, that is, let us present to our God the faith he preserved unshaken and defended from the enemies of justice.' The second voice said: 'Let us carry his shield ahead of him, that is, let us show our God that patience of his which, although it is already known to God, will be even more glorious because of our testimony. By his patience he not only bore adversities patiently but also thanked God for those same adversities.'

The third voice said: 'Let us march ahead of him and present his sword to God, that is, let us show him the obedience by which he remained obedient in both difficult and easy times in accordance with his pledge.' The fourth voice said: 'Come and let us show our God his horse, that is, let us offer the testimony of his humility. As a horse carries the body of a man, so his humility both preceded and followed

him, carrying him forth to the performance of every good work. Pride found nothing of its own in him, which is why he rode in safety.' The fifth voice said: 'Come and let us present his helmet to our God, that is, let us bear witness to the divine yearning he felt for God!

He meditated on him in his heart at all times. He had him on his lips, in his works, and yearned for him above all things. Out of his love and veneration he caused himself to die to the world. So, let us present these things to our God, for, in return for a little struggle, this man has deserved eternal rest and joy with his God for whom he yearned so much and so often!' Accompanied by the sounds of these voices and a wonderful choir of angels, my friend was carried to eternal rest.

His soul saw it all and said to itself in exultation: 'Happy am I to have been created! Happy am I to have served my God whom I now behold! Happy am I, for I have joy and glory that will never end!' In such a way did my friend come to me and receive such a reward. Although not everyone sheds his blood for the sake of my name, nevertheless, everyone will receive the same reward, provided they have the intention of giving their lives for me if the occasion presents itself and the needs of the faith demand it. See how important a good intention is!"

Christ's words to the bride about the unchanging nature and eternal duration of his justice, and about how, after taking a human nature, he revealed his justice through his love in a new light, and about how he tenderly exercises mercy toward the damned and gently teaches his knights mercy.

Chapter 12

"I am the true King. No one deserves to be called king except me, because all honor and power come from me. I am he who rendered judgment upon the first angel to fall through pride, greed, and envy. I am he who rendered judgment upon Adam and Cain as well as upon the whole world by sending it the flood due to the sins of the human

race. I am the same one who allowed the people of Israel to come into captivity and miraculously led it out with miraculous signs. All justice is to be found in me. Justice always was and is in me without beginning or end. It does not at any time grow less in me but remains in me true and unchangeable. Although at the present time my justice seems to be somewhat gentler and God seems to be a more patient judge now, this represents no change in my justice, which never changes, but only shows my love the more. I now judge the world by that same justice and that same true judgment as when I permitted my people to become slaves in Egypt and made them suffer in the desert.

My love was hidden prior to my incarnation. I kept it hidden in my justice like light obscured by a cloud. Once I had taken a human nature, although the law that had been given was changed, justice itself was not changed but was all the more clearly visible and was shown in a more abundant light in love through God's Son. This happened in three ways. First, the law was mitigated, since it had been severe because of disobedient and hardened sinners and it was difficult in order to tame the proud. Second, the Son of God suffered and died. Third, my judgment now appears to be farther away and both seems to be postponed out of mercy and to be gentler toward sinners than before. Indeed, the acts of justice concerning the first parents or the flood or those who died in the desert seem rigid and strict. But that same justice is still with me and ever has been. However, mercy and love are now more apparent. Earlier, for wise reasons, love was hidden in justice and displayed with mercy, albeit in a more hidden manner, because I never carried out and never do carry out justice without mercy or kindness without justice. Now, however, you might ask: if I show mercy in all my justice, in what way am I merciful toward the damned? I will answer you by way of a parable.

It is as if a judge were seated in judgment and his brother came along to be sentenced. The judge says to him: 'You are my brother and I am your judge and, although I sincerely love you, I cannot nor is it right for me to counteract justice. In your conscience you see what is just with respect to what you deserve. It is necessary to sentence you accordingly. If it were possible to go against justice, I would willingly take your sentence upon myself.' I am like that judge. This person is

my brother because of my human nature. When he comes to be judged by me, his conscience informs him of his guilt and he understands what his sentence should be. Since I am just, I reply to the soul - figuratively speaking - and tell it: 'You see all that is just for you in your conscience. Tell me what you deserve.' The soul answers me then: 'My conscience informs me of my sentence. It is the punishment due to me, because I did not obey you.' I answer: 'I, your judge, took on myself all your punishment and made your danger known to you as well as the way to escape punishment. It was simple justice that you could not enter heaven before atoning for your guilt. I took on your atonement, because you were incapable of bearing it your self.'

Through the prophets I showed you what would happen to me, and I did not omit a single detail of what the prophets foretold. I showed you all the love I could in order to make you turn to me. However, since you have turned away from me, you deserve to be sentenced, because you scorned mercy. However, I am still so merciful that, if it were possible for me to die again, for your sake I would again endure the same torment I once endured on the cross rather than see you sentenced to such a sentence. Justice, however, says that it is impossible for me to die again, even if mercy tells me to want to die for your sake again, if it were possible. This is how I am merciful and loving even toward the damned. I loved mankind from the start, even when I seemed to be angry, but nobody cared about or paid any attention to my love.

Because I am just and merciful, I warn the so-called knights that they should seek my mercy, lest my justice find them. My justice is as immovable as a mountain, it burns like fire, it is as frightening as thunder, and as sudden as a bow fitted with an arrow. My warning is threefold. First, I warn them as a father does his children, in order to make them turn back to me, because I am their Father and Creator. Let them return, and I will give them the patrimony due to them by right. Let them return, because, although I have been spurned, I will still welcome them with joy and go out to meet them with love. Second, I ask them like a brother to recall my wounds and my deeds. Let them return, and I will receive them like a brother. Third, as their Lord I ask them to return to the Lord to whom they pledged their faith, to whom

they owe their allegiance and to whom they have sworn themselves by oath.

Wherefore, o knights, turn back to me, your father, who brought you up with love. Think on me, your brother, who became as one of you for your sakes. Turn back to me, your kind Lord. It is highly dishonest to pledge your faith and allegiance to another lord. You pledged me that you would defend my church and help the needy. See now how you pledge allegiance to my enemy, and throw away my banner and hoist the banner of my enemy!

Wherefore, O knights, come back to me in true humility, since you deserted me through pride. If anything seems hard to suffer for me, consider what I did for you! For your sakes, I went to the cross with my feet bleeding; my hands and feet were pierced for you; I spared not a single limb of mine for you. And yet you ignore all this by running away from me. Come back, and I will give you three kinds of help. First, fortitude, so as to be able to withstand your physical and spiritual enemies. Second, a brave generosity, so that you may fear nothing but me and may deem it a joy to exert yourselves for my sake. Third, I shall give you wisdom to make you understand the true faith and the will of God. Therefore, come back and take your stand like men! For I, who am giving you this warning, am the same one whom the angels serve, the one who freed those forefathers of yours who were obedient but sentenced the disobedient and humbled the proud. I was first in war, first in suffering. Follow me, then, so that you will not be melted like wax by fire. Why are you breaking your promise? Why do you scorn your oath? Am I of less value or more unworthy than some worldly friend of yours to whom, once you pledge your faith, you keep it? To me, however, the giver of life and honor, the preserver of health, you do not render what you have promised.

For this reason, good knights, fulfill your promise and, if you are too weak to do so in deeds, at least have the will to do so! I feel pity due to the slavery the devil has imposed on you and so I will accept your intention as a deed. If you come back to me in love, then exert yourselves in the faith of my church, and I will come out to meet you like a kind father together with all my army. I will give you five good

things as a reward. First, neverending praise will always sound in your ears. Second, the face and glory of God will always be before your eyes. Third, the praise of God will never leave your lips. Fourth, you will have everything your soul can desire, and you will desire nothing more than you have. Fifth, you will never be separated from your God, but your joy will endure without end and you will live your life in joy without end.

Such will be your reward, my knights, if you defend my faith and exert yourselves more for the sake of my honor than for your own. If you have any sense, remember that I have been patient with you and that you have insulted me in a way you yourselves would never tolerate. However, although I can do all things by reason of my omnipotence, and although my justice cries out to be revenged upon you, still my mercy, which is in my wisdom and goodness, spares you. Therefore, ask for mercy! In my love I grant that which a person asks me for in humility.”

Christ's strong words to the bride against present-day knights, and about the proper way of creating knights, and about how God gives and bestows strength and help to them in their actions.

Chapter 13

“I am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in a trinity of persons. None of the three can be separated or divided from the others, but the Father is in both the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is in both the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is in both. The Divinity sent its Word to the Virgin Mary through the angel Gabriel. Yet the same God, both sending and being sent by himself, was with the angel, and he was in Gabriel, and he was in the Virgin prior to Gabriel. After the angel had delivered his message, the word was made flesh in the Virgin. I, who speak with you, am that Word.

The Father sent me through himself together with the Holy Spirit into the womb of the Virgin, although not in such away that the angels

would be left without the vision and presence of God. Rather, I, the Son, who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb, remained the same God in the sight of the angels in heaven together with the Father and the Spirit, ruling and sustaining all things. However, the human nature assumed by the only Son lay in the womb of Mary. I, who am one God in my divine and human natures, do not disdain to speak with you and thus manifest my love and strengthen the holy faith.

Although my human form seems to be here before you and to be speaking with you, nonetheless it is truer to say that your soul and your conscience are with me and in me. Nothing in heaven or on earth is impossible or difficult for me. I am like a powerful king who comes to a city with his troops and takes up the whole place, occupying all of it. In like manner, my grace fills all of your limbs and strengthens them all. I am within you and with out you. Although I may be speaking with you, I remain the same in my glory. What could possibly be difficult for me who sustains all things with my power and arranges all things in my wisdom, surpassing everything in excellence? I, who am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, without beginning or end, who assumed a human nature for the sake of the salvation of humankind, the divine nature remaining intact, who suffered, rose again, and ascended into heaven, I am now truly speaking with you.

I told you earlier about the knights who were once most pleasing to me because they were bound to me by the bond of charity. They bound themselves by their oath to offer up their body for my body, their blood for my blood. This is why I gave them my consent, why I joined them to myself in a single bond and a single company. Now, however, my grievance is that these knights, who ought to be mine, have turned away from me. I am their Creator and redeemer as well as their helper. I made a body with all its limbs for them. I made everything in the world for their use. I redeemed them with my blood. I bought an eternal inheritance for them with my passion. I protect them in every danger.

Now, however, they have turned away from me. They hold my passion for naught, they neglect my words that should delight and nourish their soul. They despise me, preferring with all their heart and soul to offer up their body and let it be wounded in return for human praise, to shed their blood for the sake of satisfying their greed, happy to die on account of worldly, devilish, empty speech. But still, although they have turned away, my mercy and justice is upon them. I mercifully watch over them so that they may not be handed over to the devil. In justice I bear with them patiently and, if they would turn back again, I would welcome them joyfully and gladly run out to meet them.

Tell that man who wants to put his knighthood at my service that he can please me once again through the following ceremony. Anyone who wants to be made a knight should proceed with his horse and armor to the churchyard and leave his horse there, since it was not made for human pride but in order to be useful in life and in defense and in fighting the enemies of God. Then let him put on his cloak, placing its clasp to his forehead, similar to what a deacon does when he puts on his stole as a sign of obedience and holy patience. In like manner, he should put on his cloak and place the clasp to his forehead as a sign both of his military vows and of the obedience undertaken for the defense of Christ's cross.

A banner of the secular government should be carried before him, reminding him that he should obey his worldly government in all the things that are not against God. Once he has entered the churchyard, the priests should go out to meet him with the banner of the church. On it the passion and wounds of Christ should be depicted as a sign that he is obliged to defend the church of God and comply with her prelates. When he enters the church, the banner of the temporal government should remain outside the church while the banner of God should go before him into the church as a sign that divine authority precedes secular authority and that one should care more about spiritual things than temporal things.

When Mass has been said up to the Agnus Dei, the presiding officer, that is, the king or someone else, should go up to the knight at

the altar and say: 'Do you want to be made a knight?' When the candidate answers, I do,' the other should add the words: 'Promise to God and to me that you will defend the faith of the Holy Church and obey its leaders in all the things pertaining to God!'

When the candidate answers 'I do,' the other should place a sword in his hands, saying: 'Behold, I place a sword in your hands so that you may not spare even your own life for the sake of God's church, so that you may crush the enemies of God and protect the friends of God.' Then he should give him the shield and say: 'Behold, I give you a shield so that you may defend yourself against the enemies of God, so that you may offer assistance to widows and orphans, so that you may add to the glory of God in every way.' Then he should place his hand on the other's neck, saying: 'Behold, you are now subject to obedience and to authority. Know, then, that you must carry out in practice what you have bound yourself to by your pledges!' After this, the cloak and its clasps should be fitted on him in order to remind him daily both of his vows to God and that, by his profession before the church, he has bound himself to do more than others to defend the church of God.

Once these things are done and the Agnus Dei has been said, the priest celebrating the Mass should give him my body in order that he may defend the faith of the Holy Church. I will be in him and he in me. I will furnish him with help and strength, and I will make him burn with the fire of my love so as to desire nothing but me and to fear nothing but me, his God. If he should happen to be on a campaign when he undertakes this service for my glory and the defense of my faith, it will still benefit him, provided his intention is upright.

I am everywhere by virtue of my power, and all people can please me by an upright intention and a good will. I am love, and no one can come to me but a person who has love. Therefore I do not order anyone to do this, since in that case they would be serving me out of fear. But those who want to undertake this form of knightly service can be pleasing to me. It would be fitting for them to show through humility that they want to return to the true exercise of knighthood,

inasmuch as desertion from the profession of true knighthood occurs through pride.”

EXPLANATION

This knight was believed to have been Sir Karl, the son of St. Bridget.

About Christ as symbolized by a goldsmith and the words of God as gold, and about how these words should be transmitted to people with the love of God, an upright conscience, and their five senses under control, and about how the preachers of God should be diligent rather than lazy in selling the gold, that is, in transmitting the word of God.

Chapter 14

“I am like a skilled goldsmith who sends his servant to sell his gold throughout the land, telling him: 'You must do three things. First of all, you must not entrust my gold to anyone except those who have calm and clear eyes. Second, do not entrust it to people who have no conscience. Third, put my gold on sale for ten talents weighed twice over! A person who refuses to weigh my gold twice will not get it. You must beware of three weapons my enemy uses against you. First of all, he wants to make you slow to put my gold on display. Second, he wishes to mix inferior metal into my gold so that those who see and test it think my gold is just rotten clay.

Third, he instructs his friends to contradict you and to claim constantly that my gold is no good.' I am like that goldsmith. I forged everything in heaven and on earth, not with hammers and tools but by my power and strength. All that is and was and will be is foreknown to me. Not the least little worm or the smallest grain can exist or continue in existence without me. Not the least little thing escapes my foreknowledge, since everything comes from me and is foreknown to me. Among all the things I have made, however, the words I have

spoken with my own lips are of the greatest value, just as gold is more valuable than other metals.

This is why my servants, whom I dispatch with my gold throughout the world, must do three things. First of all, they are not to entrust my gold to people who do not have calm and clear eyes. You may ask: 'What does it mean to have clear eyesight?' Well, a clear-sighted person is one who has divine wisdom along with divine charity. But how are you to know this? It is obvious. That person is clear-sighted and can be entrusted with my gold who lives according to reason, who removes himself from worldly vanity and curiosity, who seeks nothing so much as his God. But that person is blind who has knowledge but does not put the divine charity he understands into practice. He seems to have his eyes on God but he does not, for his eyes are on the world and he has turned his back to God.

Second, my gold is not to be entrusted to someone with no conscience. Who has a conscience if not the person who manages his temporal, perishable goods with a view to eternity, who has his soul in heaven and his body on earth, who ponders daily how he is going to depart from earth and answer to God for his deeds? My gold should be entrusted to such a person. Third, he should put my gold on sale for ten talents weighed two times over. What do the scales with which the gold is weighed symbolize if not conscience? What do the hands that weigh the gold symbolize if not a good will and desire? What are the counterweights to be used if not spiritual and corporal works?

A person who wants to buy and keep my gold, that is, my words, should examine himself uprightly on the scales of his conscience and consider how he is to pay for it with ten talents carefully weighed out in accordance with my wishes. The first talent is the person's disciplined eyesight. This makes him consider the difference between corporal and spiritual vision, what use there is in physical beauty and appearance, how much excellence there is in the beauty and glory of the angels and of the heavenly powers that surpass all the stars of the sky in splendor, and what joyful delight a soul possesses in God's commandments and in his glory.

This talent, I mean, physical vision and spiritual vision, which is found in God's commandments and in chastity, are not to be measured on the same scale. Spiritual vision counts for more than the corporal kind and weighs more, inasmuch as a person's eyes must be open to what is beneficial for the soul and necessary for the body, but closed to foolishness and indecency.

The second talent is good hearing. A person should consider the worth of indecent, silly, and derisive language. Surely, it is worth nothing more than an empty puff of air. This is why a person should hear God's praises and hymns. He should listen to the deeds and sayings of my saints. He should hear what he needs in order to foster his soul and body in virtue. This kind of hearing weighs more on the scales than the hearing of indecency. This good kind of hearing, when it is weighed on the scales against the other kind, will sink the scales all the way down, while the other, empty kind of hearing will get lifted up and weigh nothing at all.

The third talent is that of the tongue. A person should weigh the excellence and usefulness of edifying and measured speech on the scales of his conscience. He should also take note of the harmfulness and uselessness of vain and idle speech. He should then put away vain speech and love the good kind.

The fourth talent is taste. What is the taste of the world if not misery? Toil at the start of an enterprise, sorrow as it continues, bitterness at the end. Accordingly, a person should carefully weigh spiritual taste against the worldly kind, and the spiritual will outweigh worldly taste. The spiritual taste is never lost, never becomes wearisome, never diminishes. This kind of taste begins in the present through the restraint of lust and through a life of moderation and lasts forever in heaven through the enjoyment and sweet delight of God.

The fifth talent is that of the sense of touch. A person should weigh how much care and misery he feels because of the body, all the worldly cares, all the many problems with his neighbor. Then he experiences misery everywhere. Let him also weigh how great the peace of soul and of a well-disciplined mind is, how much good there

is in not being worried about vain and superfluous possessions. Then he will experience consolation everywhere. Whoever wants to measure it well should put the spiritual and physical senses of touch on the scales, and the result will be that the spiritual outweighs the corporal. This spiritual sense of touch begins and develops through the patient endurance of setbacks and through perseverance in the commandments of God, and it lasts forever in joy and peaceful rest. A person who gives more weight to physical rest and to worldly feelings and joy than to those of eternity is not worthy to touch my gold or to enjoy my happiness.

The sixth talent is human work. A person should carefully weigh in his conscience both spiritual and material work. The former leads to heaven, the latter to the world; the former to an eternal life without suffering, the latter to tremendous pain and suffering. Whoever desires my gold should give more weight to spiritual work, which is done in my love and for my glory, than to material work, since spiritual things endure, while material things will pass away.

The seventh talent is the orderly use of time. A person is given certain times to devote to spiritual things alone, other times for bodily functions, without which life is impossible (if these are used reasonably, they are counted as a spiritual use of time), and other times for physically useful activity. Since a person must render an account of his time as well as of his deeds, he should therefore give priority to the spiritual use of time before turning to material labor, and manage his time in such away that spiritual things are given more priority than temporal things so that no time is allowed to pass without the examination and right balance required by justice.

The eighth talent is the just administration of the temporal goods given to one, meaning that a rich person, as far as his means allow, should give to the poor with divine charity. But you might ask: 'What should a poor person who owns nothing give?' He should have the right intention and think the following thoughts: 'If I had anything, I would gladly give it generously.' Such an intention is counted for him as a deed. If the poor man's intention is such that he would like to have temporal possessions like others but only intends to give a small sum

and mere trifles to the poor, this intention is reckoned for him as a small deed. Therefore a rich person with possessions should practice charity. A needy person should have the intention of giving, and it will gain him merit. Whoever gives more weight to the temporal than to the spiritual, whoever gives me one shilling and the world a hundred and himself a thousand does not use a fair measuring standard. A person who uses a measuring standard like that does not deserve to have my gold. I, the giver of all things, who can also take all things away, deserve the worthier share. Temporal goods were created for human use and necessity, not for superfluity.

The ninth talent is the careful examination of times gone and past. A person should examine his deeds, what sort of deeds they were, their number, how he has corrected them and with what merit. He should also consider whether his good works were fewer than his bad. If he should find his bad works to be more numerous than his good, then he should have a perfect purpose of amendment and be truly contrite for his misdeeds. This intention, if it be true and firm, will weigh more in God's sight than all his sins.

The tenth talent is the consideration of and planning for future time. If a person has the intention of not wanting to love anything but the things of God, of not desiring anything but what he knows to be pleasing to God, of willingly and patiently embracing difficulties, even the pains of hell, were that to give God any consolation and were it to be God's will, then this talent excels all the rest. Through this talent all dangers are easily avoided. Whoever pays these ten talents will get my gold.

However, as I said, the enemy wants to impede the people delivering my gold in three ways. First he wants to make them slow and lazy. There is both a physical and a spiritual laziness. The physical kind is when the body tires of working, getting up, and so forth. Spiritual laziness is when a spiritually minded person, knowing the sweet delight and grace of my Spirit, prefers to rest in that delight rather than to go out and help others to partake of it with him. Did not Peter and Paul experience the overflowingly sweet delight of my Spirit? If it had been my will, they would rather have lain hidden in

the lowest part of the earth with the interior delight they had than to go out into the world.

However, in order that others might be made participants in their sweet delight and in order to instruct others along with themselves, they preferred to go out for other people's sake as well as for their own greater glory and not to remain by themselves without strengthening others with the grace given them. In like manner my friends, although they would like to be alone and to enjoy that sweet delight they have already, should now go forth so that others might also become participants in their joy. Just as someone with abundant possessions does not use them for himself alone but entrusts them to others, so too my words and my grace should not be kept hidden but should be broadcast to others so that they, too, may be edified.

My friends can give aid to three kinds of people. First, to the damned; second, to sinners, that is, to those who fall into sins and get up again; third, to the good who stand firm. But you may ask: 'How can a person give aid to the damned, seeing that they are unworthy of grace and it is impossible for them to return to grace?' Let me answer you by way of a simile. It is as though there were countless holes at the bottom of a certain precipice and anyone falling into them would necessarily sink to the depths. However, if someone were to block up one of the holes, the person falling would not sink down as deeply as if no hole had been blocked up. This is what happens to the damned. Although by reason of my justice and their own hardened malice they have to be condemned at a definite and foreknown time, still their punishment will be lighter if they are held back by others from doing certain evils and instead urged to do something good. That is how I am merciful even toward the damned. Although mercy pleads for leniency, justice and their own wickedness countermand it.

In the second place, they can give aid to those who fall down but get back up again by teaching them how to get up, by making them take care not to fall, and by instructing them how to improve and to resist their passions.

In the third place, they can be of benefit to the righteous and perfect. Do not they themselves fall as well? Of course they do, but it is for their greater glory and the devil's shame. Just as a soldier lightly wounded in battle gets all the more stirred up because of his wound and becomes that much keener for battle, so too the diabolical temptation of adversity stirs up my chosen ones all the more for the spiritual struggle and for humility, and they make all the more fervent progress toward winning the crown of glory. Therefore my words should not be kept hidden from my friends, for, having heard of my grace, they will get all the more stirred up as to devotion toward me.

My enemy's second method is to use deception in order to make my gold look like clay. For this reason, when any of my words are being transcribed, the transcriber should bring two trusty witnesses or one man of proven conscience to certify that he has examined the document. Only then may it be transmitted to whomever he wants, in order not to come uncertified into the hands of enemies who could add something false, which could lead to the words of truth being denigrated among simple folk.

My enemy's third method is to make his own friends preach resistance to my gold. My friends should then say to those who contradict them: 'The gold of these words contains, as it were, only three teachings. They teach you to fear rightly, to love piously, to desire heaven intelligently. Test the words and see for yourselves, and, if you find anything else there, contradict it!' ”

Christ's words to the bride about how the way to paradise was opened by his coming, and about the ardent love he showed us in bearing so many sufferings for us from his birth to his death, and about how the way to hell has now been made wide and the way to paradise narrow.

Chapter 15

“You are wondering why I am telling you such things and why I am revealing such marvels to you. Is it for your sake alone? Of course

not, it is for the edification and salvation of others. You see, the world was like a kind of wilderness in which there was one road leading down to the great abyss. In the abyss were two chambers. One was so deep that it had no bottom and the people who went down into it never came up again. The second was not so deep or frightening as the first. Those who went down into it had some hope of help; they experienced longing and delay but not misery, darkness but not torment. The people who lived in this second chamber kept sending their cries daily to a magnificent city nearby that was filled with every good thing and every delight.

They cried out hardily, for they knew the way to the city. However, the wild forest was so thick and dense that they were unable to cross it or make any advance because of its density, and they had not the strength to forge a path through it. What was their cry? Their cry was this: 'O God, come and give us help, show us the way and enlighten us, we are waiting for you! We cannot be saved by anyone but you.' This cry came to my hearing in heaven and moved me to mercy. Appeased by their crying, I came to the wilderness like a pilgrim.

But before I began to work and make my way, a voice spoke out ahead of me, saying: 'The ax has been laid to the tree.' This voice was none other than John the Baptist. He was sent before me and cried out in the desert: 'The ax has been laid to the tree,' which is to say: 'Let the human race be ready, for the ax is now ready, and he has come to prepare a way to the city and is uprooting every obstacle.' When I came, I worked from sunrise to sunset, that is, I devoted myself to the salvation of humankind from the time of my incarnation until my death on the cross. At the start of my undertaking, I took flight into the wilderness away from my enemies, more precisely, from Herod who was pursuing me; I was put to the test by the devil and suffered persecution from men. Later, while enduring much toil, I ate and drank and sinlessly complied with other natural needs in order to build up the faith and to show that I had truly taken a human nature.

While I prepared the way to the city, that is, to heaven, and uprooted all the obstacles that had sprung up, brambles and thorns

scratched my side and harsh nails wounded my hands and feet. My teeth and my cheeks were badly mishandled. I bore it with patience and did not turn back but went ahead all the more zealously, like an animal driven by starvation that, when it sees a man holding a spear against it, charges into the spear in its desire to get at the man. And the more the man thrusts the spear into the entrails of the animal, the more the animal thrusts itself against the spear in its desire to get at the man, until at last its entrails and entire body are pierced through and through. In like manner, I burned with such love for the soul, that, when I beheld and experienced all these harsh torments, the more eager men were to kill me, the more ardent I became to suffer for the salvation of souls.

Thus I made my way in the wilderness of this world and prepared a road through my blood and sweat. The world might well be called a wilderness, since it was lacking in every virtue and remained a wilderness of vice. It had only one road on which everyone was descending into hell, the damned toward damnation, the good towards darkness. I heard mercifully their longstanding desire for future salvation and came like a pilgrim in order to work. Unknown to them in my divinity and power, I prepared the road that leads to heaven. My friends saw this way and observed the difficulties of my work and my eagerness of heart, and many of them followed me in joy for a long time.

But now there has been a change in the voice that used to cry out: 'Be ready!' My road has been altered, and thickets and thorn bushes have grown up, and those who were advancing on it have halted. The way to hell has been opened up. It is broad, and many people travel by it. However, in order not to let my road become altogether forgotten and neglected, my few friends still travel it in their longing for their heavenly homeland, like birds moving from bush to bush, hidden, as it were, and serving me out of fear, since everyone nowadays thinks that to travel by the way of the world leads to happiness and joy.

For this reason, because my road has become narrow while the road of the world has been widened, I am now shouting out to my friends in the wilderness, that is, in the world, that they should remove

the thorn bushes and brambles from the road leading to heaven and recommend my road to those who are making their way.

As it is written: 'Blessed are those who have not seen me and have believed'. Likewise, happy are they who now believe in my words and put them into practice. As you see, I am like a mother who runs out to meet her roving son. She holds out a light for him on the way so that he can see the road. In her love, she goes to meet him on the way and shortens his journey. She goes up to him and embraces and greets him. With love like that I shall run out to meet my friends and all the people returning to me, and I shall give their hearts and souls the light of divine wisdom. I will embrace them with glory and surround them with the heavenly court where there is neither heaven above nor earth below but only the vision of God; where there is neither food nor drink, but only the enjoyment of God.

The road to hell is open for the wicked. Once they enter into it, they will never come up again. They will be without glory or bliss and will be filled with misery and everlasting reproach. This is why I speak these words and reveal this love of mine, so that those who have turned away may turn back to me and recognize me, their Creator, whom they have forgotten.”

Christ's words to the bride about why he speaks with her rather than with others better than she, and about three things commanded, three forbidden, three permitted, and three recommended to the bride by Christ; a most excellent lesson.

Chapter 16

“Many people wonder why I speak with you and not with others who live a better life and have served me for a longer time. I answer them by way of a parable: A certain lord owns several vineyards in several different regions. The wine of each vineyard has the particular taste of the region where it comes from. Once the wine has been pressed, the owner of the vineyards sometimes drinks the mediocre

and weaker wine and not the better kind. If any of those present sees him and asks their lord why he does so, he will answer that this particular wine tasted good and sweet to him at the time. This does not mean that the lord gets rid of the better wines or holds them in disdain, but that he reserves them for his use and privilege on an appropriate occasion, each of them for the occasion for which it is suited. This is the way I deal with you.

I have many friends whose life is sweeter to me than honey, more delicious than any wine, brighter in my sight than the sun. However, it pleased me to choose you in my Spirit, not because you are better than they are or equal to them or better qualified, but because I wanted to - I who can make sages out of fools and saints out of sinners. I did not grant you so great a grace because I hold the others in disdain. Rather, I am reserving them for another use and privilege as justice demands. Humble yourself then in every way, and do not let anything trouble you but your sins. Love everyone, even those who seem to hate and slander you, for they are only providing you with a greater opportunity to win your crown! Three things I command you to do. Three things I command you not to do. Three things I permit you to do. Three things I recommend you to do.

I command you to do three things, then. First, to desire nothing but your God; second, to cast off all pride and arrogance; third, always to hate the lust of the flesh. Three things I order you not to do. First, neither to love vain, indecent speech nor, second, excessive eating and superfluity in other things, and, third, to flee from worldly merriment and frivolity. I permit you to do three things. First, to sleep moderately for the sake of good health; second, to carry out temperate vigils to train the body; third, to eat moderately for the strength and sustenance of your body.

I recommend three things to you. First, to take pains to fast and carry out good works that earn the promise of the kingdom of heaven; second, to dispose of your possessions for the glory of God; third, I counsel you to think on two things continually in your heart. First, think on all that I have done for you by suffering and dying for you. Such a thought stirs up love for God. Second, consider my justice and

the coming judgment. This instills fear in your mind. Finally, there is a fourth thing which I both order and command and recommend and permit. This is to obey as you ought. I order this, inasmuch as I am your God. I command you not to act otherwise, inasmuch as I am your Lord. I permit this to you, inasmuch as I am your bridegroom. I also recommend it, inasmuch as I am your friend.”

Christ's words to the bride about how God's divinity can truly be named virtue, and about the manifold downfall of humankind instigated by the devil, and about the manifold remedy to aid humankind that was given and provided for through Christ.

Chapter 17

The Son of God spoke to the bride saying: ”Do you firmly believe that what the priest holds in his hands is the body of God?” She answered: ”I firmly believe that, just as the word sent to Mary was made flesh and blood in her womb, so too that which I now see in the hands of the priest I believe to be true God and man.” The Lord answered her: ”I am the same who am speaking to you, remaining eternally in the divine nature, having become human in the womb of the Virgin but without losing my divinity. My divinity can rightly be named virtue, since there are two things in it: power most powerful, the source of all power, and wisdom most wise, the source and seat of all wisdom. In this divine nature all things that exist are ordered wisely and rationally.

There is not one little tittle in heaven that is not in it and that has not been established and foreseen by it. Not a single atom on earth, not one spark in hell is outside its rule and can hide itself from its foreknowledge. Do you wonder why I said 'not one little tittle in heaven'? Well, a tittle is the final stroke on a glossed word. Indeed God's word is the final stroke on all things and was ordained for the glorification of all things. Why did I say 'not a single atom on earth,' if not because all earthly things are transitory? Not even atoms, however small they are, are outside of God's plan and providence. Why did I

say 'not one spark in hell,' if not because there is nothing in hell except envy? Just as a spark comes from fire, so all kinds of evil and envy come from the unclean spirits, with the result that they and their followers always have envy but never love of any kind.

Therefore, perfect knowledge and power are in God, which is why each thing is so arranged that nothing is greater than God's power, nor can anything be caused to be made contrary to reason, but all things have been made rationally, suitable to the nature of each thing. The divine nature, then, inasmuch as it can rightly be named virtue, showed its greatest virtue in the creation of the angels. It created them for its own glory and for their delight, so that they might have charity and obedience: charity, by which they love none but God; obedience, by which they obey God in all things. Some of the angels went wickedly astray and wickedly set their will against these two things. They turned their will directly against God, so much so that virtue became odious to them and, therefore, that which was opposed to God became dear to them. Because of this disordered direction of their will, they deserved to fall. It was not that God caused their fall, but they themselves brought it about through the abuse of their own knowledge.

When God saw the reduction in the numbers of the heavenly host that had been caused through their sin, he again showed the power of his divinity. For he created human beings in body and soul. He gave them two goods, namely the freedom to do good and the freedom to avoid evil, because, given that no more angels were to be created, it was fitting that human beings should have the freedom of rising, if they wished, to angelic rank. God also gave the human soul two goods, namely a rational mind to order to distinguish opposite from opposite and better from best; and fortitude in order to persevere in the good. When the devil saw this love of God for mankind, he considered thus in his envy: 'So then, God has made a new thing that can rise up to our place and by its own efforts gain that which we lost through neglect!

If we can deceive him and cause his downfall, he will cease his efforts, and then he will not rise up to such a rank.' Then, having

thought out a plan of deception, they deceived the first man and prevailed over him with my just permission. But how and when was the man defeated? To be sure, when he left off virtue and did what was forbidden, when the serpent's promise pleased him more than obedience to me. Due to this disobedience he could not live in heaven, since he had despised God, and not in hell either, since his soul, using reason, carefully examined what he had done and had contrition for his crime.

For that reason, the God of virtue, considering human wretchedness, arranged a kind of imprisonment or place of captivity, where people might come to recognize their weakness and atone for their disobedience until they should deserve to rise to the rank they had lost. The devil, meanwhile, taking this into consideration, wanted to kill the human soul by means of ingratitude. Injecting his filth into the soul, he so darkened her intellect that she had neither the love nor the fear of God. God's justice was forgotten and his judgment scorned. For that reason, God's goodness and gifts were no longer appreciated but fell into oblivion.

Thus God was not loved, and the human conscience was so darkened that humanity was in a wretched state and fell into even greater wretchedness. Although humanity was in such a state, still God's virtue was not lacking; rather, he revealed his mercy and justice. He revealed his mercy when he revealed to Adam and other good people that they would obtain help at a predetermined time. This stirred up their fervor and love for God. He also revealed his justice through the flood in Noah's day, which filled human hearts with the fear of God. Even after that the devil still did not leave off further molesting humankind, but attacked it by means of two other evils. First, he inspired faithlessness in people; second, hopelessness. He inspired faithlessness in order that people might not believe in the word of God but would attribute his wonders to fate. He inspired hopelessness lest they hope to be saved and obtain the glory they had lost.

The God of virtue supplied two remedies to fight these two evils. Against hopelessness he offered hope, giving Abram a new name and

promising him that from his seed there would be born the one who would lead him and the imitators of his faith back to the lost inheritance. He also appointed prophets to whom he revealed the manner of redemption and the times and places of his suffering. With respect to the second evil of faithlessness, God spoke to Moses and revealed his will and the law to him and backed his words up with portents and deeds. Although all this was done, still the devil did not desist from his evil. Constantly urging humankind on to worse sins, he inspired two other attitudes in the human heart: first, that of regarding the law as unbearable and losing peace of mind over trying to live up to it; second, he inspired the thought that God's decision to die and suffer out of charity was too incredible and far too difficult to believe.

Again God provided two further remedies for these two evils. First, he sent his own Son into the womb of the Virgin so that nobody would lose peace of mind over how hard the Law was to fulfill, since, having assumed a human nature, his Son fulfilled the requirements of the Law and then made it less strict. With respect to the second evil, God displayed the very height of virtue. The Creator died for creation, the righteous one for sinners. Innocent, he suffered to the last drop, as had been foretold by the prophets. Even then the wickedness of the devil did not cease, but again he rose up against humanity, inspiring two further evils. First, he inspired the human heart to hold my words in contempt and, second, to let my deeds fall into oblivion.

God's virtue has again begun to indicate two new remedies against these two evils. The first is to return my words to honor and to undertake to imitate my deeds. This is why God has led you in his Spirit. He has also revealed his will on earth to his friends through you, for two reasons in particular. The first is in order to reveal God's mercy, so that people might learn to recall the memory of God's love and suffering. The second is to remind them of God's justice and to make them fear the severity of my judgment.

Therefore, tell this man that, given that my mercy has already come, he should bring it out into the light so that people might learn to seek mercy and to beware of the judgment on themselves. Moreover, tell him that, although my words have been written down, still they

must first be preached and put into practice. You can understand this by way of a metaphor. When Moses was about to receive the Law, a staff was made and two stone tablets were hewn. Nevertheless, he did not work miracles with the staff until there was a need for it and the occasion demanded it. When the acceptable time came, then there was a show of miracles and my words were proved by deeds.

Likewise, when the New Law arrived, first my body grew and developed until a suitable time and from then on my words were heard. However, although my words were heard, still they did not have force and strength in themselves until accompanied by my deeds. And they were not fulfilled until I fulfilled all the things that had been foretold about me through my passion. It is the same now. Although my loving words have been written down and should be conveyed to the world, still they cannot have any force until they have been completely brought out into the light.”

About three wonderful things that Christ has done for the bride, and about how the sight of angels is too beautiful and that of devils too ugly for human nature to bear, and about why Christ has condescended to come as a guest to a widow like her.

Chapter 18

“I have done three wonderful things for you. You see with spiritual eyes. You hear with spiritual ears. With the physical touch of your hand you feel my spirit in your living breast. You do not see the sight you see as it is in fact. For if you saw the spiritual beauty of the angels and of holy souls, your body could not bear to see it but would break like a vessel, broken and decayed due to the soul's joy at the sight. If you saw the demons as they are, you would either go on living in great sorrow or you would die a sudden death at the terrible sight of them. This is why spiritual beings appear to you as if they had bodies.

The angels and souls appear to you in the likeness of human beings who have soul and life, because angels live by their spirit. The demons appear to you in a form that is mortal and belongs to mortality, such as in the form of animals or other creatures. Such creatures have a mortal spirit, since when their body dies, their spirit dies too. However, devils do not die in spirit but are forever dying and live forever. Spiritual words are spoken to you by means of analogies, since you cannot grasp them otherwise. The most wonderful thing of all is that you feel my spirit move in your heart.”

Then she replied: ”O my Lord, Son of the Virgin, why have you condescended to come as a guest to so base a widow, who is poor in every good work and so weak in understanding and discernment and ridden with sin for so long?” He answered her: ”I can do three things. First, I can make a poor person rich and a foolish person of little intelligence capable and intelligent. I am also able to restore an aged person to youth. It is like the phoenix that brings together dried twigs. Among them is the twig of a certain tree that is dry by nature on the outside and warm on the inside. The warmth of the sunbeams comes to it first and kindles it, and then all the twigs are set on fire from it. In the same way you should gather together the virtues by which you can be restored from your sins.

Among them you should have a piece of wood that is warm on the inside and dry on the outside; I mean your heart, which should be dry and pure from all worldly sensuality on the outside and so full of love on the inside that you want nothing and yearn for nothing but me. Then the fire of my love will come into the heart first and in that way you will be enkindled with all the virtues. Thoroughly burned by them and purged from sins, you will arise like the rejuvenated bird, having put off the skin of sensuality.”

Christ's words to the bride about how God speaks to his friends through his preachers and through sufferings, and about Christ as symbolized by an owner of bees and the church by a beehive and Christians by bees, and about why bad Christians are allowed to live among good ones.

Chapter 19

“I am your God. My Spirit has led you to hear and see and feel: to hear my words, to see visions, to feel my Spirit with the joy and devotion of your soul. All mercy is found in me together with justice, and there is mercy in my justice. I am like a man who sees his friends fall away from him, down on to a road where there is a horrible yawning gap out of which it is impossible to climb. I speak to these friends through those people who have an understanding of scripture. I speak with a lash, I warn them of their danger. But they just act contrariwise. They head for the impasse and do not care about what I say.

I have only one thing to say: 'Sinner, turn back to me! You are headed for danger; there are traps along the way of a kind that are hidden from you due to the darkness of your heart.' They scorn what I say. They ignore my mercy. However, though my mercy is such that I warn sinners, my justice is such that, even if all the angels were to drag them back, they could not be converted unless they themselves direct their own will toward the good. If they turned their will to me and gave me their heart's consent, not all the demons together could hold them back.

There is an insect called the bee that is kept by its lord and master. The bees show respect in three ways to their ruler, the queen bee, and derive benefit from her in three ways. First, the bees carry all the nectar they find to their queen. Second, they stay or go at her beck and call, and wherever they fly and wherever they appear, their love and charity is always for the queen. Third, they follow and serve her, sticking steadily close by her side. In return for these three things, the bees receive a threefold benefit from their queen.

First, her signal gives them a set time to go out and work. Second, she gives them direction and mutual love. Because of her presence and rule and because of the love she has toward them and they toward her, all the bees are united with one another in love, and each one rejoices over the others and at their advancement. Third, they are made fruitful

through their mutual love and the joy of their leader. Just as fish discharge their eggs while playing together in the sea, and their eggs fall into the sea and bear fruit, so bees are also made fruitful through their mutual love and their leader's affection and joy. By my wondrous power, a seemingly lifeless seed comes forth from their love and will receive life through my goodness.

The master, that is, the owner of the bees, speaks to his servant in his concern for them: 'My servant,' he says, 'it seems to me that my bees are ill and do not fly at all.' The servant answers: 'I do not understand this illness, but if it is so, I ask you how I can learn about it.' The master answers: 'You can infer their illness or problem by three signs. The first sign is that they are weak and sluggish in flight, which means that they have lost the queen from whom they receive strength and consolation. The second sign is that they go out at random and unplanned hours, which means that they are not getting the signal of their leader's call.

The third sign is that they show no love for the beehive, and therefore return home carrying nothing back, sating themselves but not bringing any nectar to live on in the future. Healthy and fit bees are steady and strong in their flight. They keep regular hours for going out and returning, bringing back wax to build their dwellings and honey for their nourishment.' The servant answers the master: 'If they are useless and infirm, why do you allow them to go on anymore and do not do away with them?' The master answers: 'I permit them to live for three reasons, inasmuch as they provide three benefits, although not by their own power.

First, because they occupy the dwellings prepared for them, horseflies do not come and occupy the empty dwellings and disturb the good bees that remain. Second, other bees become more fruitful and diligent at their work due to the badness of the bad bees. The fruitful bees see the bad and unfruitful bees working only to satisfy their own desires, and they become the more diligent in their work of gathering for their queen the more eager the bad bees are seen to be in gathering for their own desires. In the third place, the bad bees are useful to the good bees when it comes to their mutual defense. For

there is a flying insect accustomed to eating bees. When the bees perceive this insect coming, all of them hate it in common.

Although the bad bees fight and hate it out of envy and self-defense, while the good ones do so out of love and justice, both the good and bad bees work together to attack these insects. If all the bad bees were taken away and only the good ones were left, this insect would quickly prevail over them, since then they would be fewer. That is why,' the master said, 'I put up with the useless bees. However, when autumn comes, I shall provide for the good bees and shall separate them from the bad ones that, if they are left outside the beehive, will die from the cold.

But if they remain inside and do not gather, they will be in danger of starvation, inasmuch as they have neglected to gather food when they could.' I am God, the Creator of all things; I am the owner and the lord of the bees. Out of my ardent love and by my blood I founded my beehive, that is, the Holy Church, in which Christians should be gathered and dwell in unity of faith and mutual love. Their dwelling-places are their hearts, and the honey of good thoughts and affections should inhabit it. This honey ought to be brought there through considering my love in creation and my toils in redemption and my patient support and mercy in calling back and restoring.

In this beehive, that is, in the Holy Church, there are two kinds of people, just as there were two kinds of bees. The first ones are those bad Christians who do not gather nectar for me but for themselves. They return carrying nothing back and do not recognize their leader. They have a sting instead of honey and lust instead of love. The good bees represent good Christians. They show me respect in three ways. First, they hold me as their leader and lord, offering me sweet honey, that is, works of charity, which are pleasing to me and useful to themselves. Second, they wait upon my will. Their will accords with my will, all their thought is on my passion, all their actions are for my glory. Third, they follow me, that is, they obey me in everything.

Wherever they are, whether outside or inside, whether in sorrow or in joy, their heart is always joined to my heart. This is why they

derive benefit from me in three ways. First, through the call of virtue and my inspiration, they have fixed and certain times, night at nighttime and daylight at daytime. Indeed, they change night into day, that is, worldly happiness into eternal happiness, and perishable happiness into everlasting stability. They are sensible in every respect, inasmuch as they make use of their present goods for their necessities; they are steadfast in adversity, wary in success, moderate in the care of the body, careful and circumspect in their actions. Second, like the good bees, they have mutual love, in such away that they are all of one heart toward me, loving their neighbor as themselves but me above all else, even above themselves.

Third, they are made fruitful through me. What is it to be fruitful if not to have my Holy Spirit and be filled with him? Whoever does not have him and lacks his honey is unfruitful and useless; he falls down and perishes. However, the Holy Spirit sets the person in whom he dwells on fire with divine love; he opens the senses of his mind; he uproots pride and incontinence; he spurs the soul on to the glory of God and the contempt of the world.

The unfruitful bees do not know this Spirit and therefore scorn discipline, fleeing the unity and fellowship of love. They are empty of good works; they change daylight into darkness, consolation into mourning, happiness into sorrow. Nevertheless, I let them live for three reasons. First, so that horseflies, that is, the infidels, do not get into the dwelling-places that have been prepared. If the wicked were removed all at once, there would be too few good Christians left, and, because of their small numbers, the infidels, being greater in number, would come and live side by side with them, causing them much disturbance. Second, they are tolerated in order to test the good Christians, for, as you know, the perseverance of good people is put to the test by the wickedness of the wicked.

Adversity reveals how patient a person is, while prosperity makes plain how persevering and temperate he is. Since vices insinuate themselves into good characters from time to time and virtues can often make people proud, the wicked are allowed to live alongside the good in order that good people may not become enervated from too

much happiness or fall asleep out of sloth, and also in order that they may frequently fix their gaze on God. Where there is little struggle, there is also little reward. In the third place, they are tolerated for their assistance so that neither the gentiles nor other hostile infidels might harm those seeming to be good Christians, but that they might rather fear them because there are more of them. The good offer resistance to the wicked out of justice and love of God, while the wicked do so only for the sake of self-defense and to avoid God's wrath. In this way, then, the good and wicked help each other, with the result that the wicked are tolerated for the sake of the good and the good receive a higher crown on account of the wickedness of the wicked.

The beekeepers are the prelates of the church and the princes of the land, whether good or bad. I speak to the good keepers and I, their God and keeper, admonish them to keep my bees safe. Have them consider the comings and goings of the bees! Let them take note of whether they are sick or healthy! If they happen not to know how to discern this, here are three signs I give them to recognize it. Those bees are useless that are sluggish in flight, erratic in their hours, and contribute nothing to bringing in honey. The ones that are sluggish in flight are those who show greater concern for temporal goods than for eternal ones, who fear the death of the body more than that of the soul, who say this to themselves: 'Why should I be full of disquiet, when I can have quiet and peace? Why should I die to myself when I can live?'

These wretches do not reflect on how I, the powerful King of glory, chose to be powerless. I know the greatest quiet and peace and, indeed, I am peace itself, and yet I chose to give up peace and quiet for their sake and freed them through my own death. They are erratic in their hours in that their affections tend toward worldliness, their conversation toward indecency, their labor toward selfishness, and they arrange their time according to the cravings of their bodies. The ones who have no love for the beehive and do not gather nectar are those who do some good works for my sake but only out of fear of punishment. Even though they do perform some works of piety, still they do not give up their selfishness and sin. They want to have God but without giving up the world or enduring any wants or hardship.

These bees are the kind that hurry home with empty feet, but their hurry is unwise, since they do not fly with the right sort of love. Accordingly, when autumn comes, that is, when the time of separation comes, the useless bees will be separated from the good ones and they will suffer eternal hunger in return for their selfish love and desires. In return for scorning God and for their disgust at virtue they will be destroyed by excessive cold but without being consumed.

However, my friends should be on their guard against three evils from the bad bees. First, against letting their rottenness enter the ears of my friends, since the bad bees are poisonous. Once their honey is gone, there is nothing sweet left in them; instead they are full of poisoned bitterness. Second, they should guard the pupils of their eyes against the wings of the bad bees that are as sharp as needles. Third, they should be careful not to expose their bodies to the tails of the bees, for they have barbs that sting sharply. The learned who study their habits and temperament can explain the meaning of these things. Those who are unable to understand it should be wary of the risks and avoid their company and example.

Otherwise, they will learn by experience what they did not know how to learn by listening." Then his Mother said: "Blessed are you, my Son, you who are and were and always will be! Your mercy is sweet and your justice great. You seem to remind me, my Son - to speak figuratively - of a cloud rising up to heaven preceded by a light breeze. A dark spot appeared in the cloud, and a person who was out of doors, feeling the light breeze, raised his eyes and saw the dark cloud and thought to himself: 'This dark cloud seems to me to indicate rain.' And he prudently hurried into a shelter and hid himself from the rain.

Others, however, who were blind or who perhaps did not care, made little of the light breeze and were unafraid of the dark cloud, but they learned by experience what the cloud meant. The cloud, taking over the whole sky, came with violent commotion and so furious and mighty a fire that living things were expiring at the very commotion.

The fire was consuming all the inner and outer parts of man so that nothing remained.

My Son, this cloud is your words, which seem dark and incredible to many people since they have not been heard much and since they have been given to ignorant people and have not been confirmed by portents. These words were preceded by my prayer and by the mercy with which you have mercy on everyone and, like a mother, draw everyone to yourself.

This mercy is as light as a light breeze because of your patience and sufferance. It is warm with the love with which you teach mercy to those who provoke you to anger and offer kindness to those who scorn you. Therefore, may all those who hear these words raise their eyes and see and know their source. They should consider whether these words signify mercy and humility. They should reflect on whether the words signify present or future things, truth or falsehood. If they find that the words are true, let them hurry to a shelter, that is, to true humility and love of God. For, when justice comes, the soul will then be separated from the body and engulfed by fire and burn both outwardly and inwardly. It will burn, to be sure, but it will not be consumed. For this reason, I, the Queen of mercy, cry out to the inhabitants of the world: may they raise their eyes and behold mercy! I admonish and beseech like a mother, I counsel like a sovereign lady.

When justice comes, it will be impossible to withstand it. Therefore, have a firm faith and be thoughtful, test the truth in your conscience, change your will, and then the one who has shown you words of love will also show the deeds and proof of love!" Then the Son spoke to me, saying: "Above, regarding the bees, I showed you that they receive three benefits from their queen. I tell you now that those crusaders whom I have placed at the borders of Christian lands should be bees like that. But now they are fighting against me, for they do not care about souls and have no compassion on the bodies of those who have been converted from error to the Catholic faith and to me.

They oppress them with hardships and deprive them of their liberties. They do not instruct them in the faith, but deprive them of

the sacraments and send them to hell with a greater punishment than if they had stayed in their traditional paganism.

Furthermore, they fight only in order to increase their own pride and augment their greed. Therefore, the time is coming for them when their teeth will be ground, their right hand mutilated, their right foot severed, in order that they may live and know themselves.”

God's grievance concerning three men now going around in the world, and about how from the start God established three estates, namely those of the clergy, the defenders, and the laborers; and about the punishment prepared for the thankless and about the glory given to the thankful.

Chapter 20

The great host of heaven was seen, and God spoke to it, saying: ”Although you know and see all things in me, however, because it is my wish, I will state my complaint before you concerning three things. The first is that those lovely beehives, which were built in heaven from all eternity and from which those worthless bees went out, are empty. The second is that the bottomless pit, against which neither rocks nor trees are of any help, stands ever open. Souls descend into it like snow falling from the sky down to earth. Just as the sun dissolves snow into water, so too souls are dissolved of every good by that terrible torment and are renewed unto every punishment. My third complaint is that few people notice the fall of souls or the empty dwellings from which the bad angels have strayed. I am therefore right to complain.

I chose three men from the beginning. By this I am figuratively speaking of the three estates in the world. First, I chose a cleric to proclaim my will in his words and to demonstrate it in his actions. Second, I chose a defender to defend my friends with his own life and to be ready for any undertaking for my sake. Third, I chose a laborer to labor with his hands in order to provide bodily food through his work.

The first man, that is, the clergy, has now become leprous and mute. Anyone who looks to see a fine and virtuous character in him shrinks back at the sight and shudders to approach him because of the leprosy of his pride and greed. When he wants to listen to him, the priest is mute about praising me but a chatterbox in praising himself.

So, how is the path to be opened that leads the way to great joy, if the one who should be leading the way is so weak? And if the one who should be proclaiming it is mute, how will that heavenly joy be heard of? The second man, the defender, trembles at heart and his hands are idle. He trembles at causing scandal in the world and losing his reputation. His hands are idle in that he does not perform any holy works. Instead, everything he does, he does for the world. Who, then, will defend my people if the one who should be their leader is afraid?

The third man is like an ass that lowers its head to the ground and stands with its four feet joined together. Sure, indeed, the people are like an ass that longs for nothing but things of the earth, which neglects the things of heaven and goes in search of perishable goods. They have four feet, since they have little faith and their hope is idle; third, they have no good works and, fourth, they are entirely intent upon sinning. This is why their mouth is always open for gluttony and greed. My friends, how can that endless yawning pit be reduced or the honeycomb be filled by people such as these?"

God's Mother replied: "May you be blessed, my Son! Your grievance is justified. Your friends and I have only one word of excuse for you to save the human race. It is this: 'Have mercy, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God!' This is my cry and the cry of your friends." The Son replied: "Your words are sweet to my ears, their taste delights my mouth, they enter my heart with love. I do have a cleric, a defender, and a peasant. The first pleases me like a bride whom an honest bridegroom yearns and longs for with divine love. His voice will be like the voice of clamorous speech that echoes in the woods. The second will be ready to give his life for me and will not fear the reproach of the world. I shall arm him with the weapons of my Holy Spirit. The third will have so firm a faith that he will say: 'I believe as firmly as if I saw what I believe. I hope for all the things God has

promised.' He will have the intention of doing good and growing in virtue and avoiding evil.

In the first man's mouth I shall put three sayings for him to proclaim. His first proclamation will be: 'Let him who has faith put what he believes into practice!' The second: 'Let him who has a firm hope be steadfast in every good work.' The third: 'Let him who loves perfectly and with charity yearn fervently to see the object of his love!' The second man will work like a strong lion, taking careful precautions against treachery and persevering steadfastly. The third man will be as wise as a serpent that stands on its tail and lifts its head to the skies. These three will carry out my will. Others will follow them. Although I speak of three, by them I mean many." Then he spoke to the bride, saying: "Stand firm! Do not be concerned about the world or about its reproaches, for I, who heard every kind of reproach, am your God and your Lord."

The words of the glorious Virgin to her daughter about how Christ was taken down from the cross and about her own bitterness and sweetness at the passion of her Son, and about how the soul is symbolized by a virgin and the love of the world and the love of God by two youths, and about the qualities the soul should have as a virgin.

Chapter 21

Mary spoke: "You should reflect on five things, my daughter. First, how every limb in my Son's body grew stiff and cold at his death and how the blood that flowed from his wounds as he was suffering dried up and clung to each limb. Second, how his heart was pierced so bitterly and mercilessly that the man speared it until the lance hit a rib, and both parts of the heart were on the lance. Third, reflect on how he was taken down from the cross! The two men who took him down from the cross made use of three stepladders: one reached to his feet, the second just below his armpits and arms, the third to the middle of his body.

The first man got up and held him by the middle. The second, getting up on another ladder, first pulled a nail out of one arm, then moved the ladder and pulled the nail from the other hand. The nails extended through the crossbeam. The man who had been holding up the weight of the body then went down as slowly and carefully as he could, while the other man got up on the stepladder that went to the feet and pulled out the nails from the feet. When he was lowered to the ground, one of them held the body by the head and the other by the feet. I, his mother, held him about the waist. And so the three of us carried him to a rock that I had covered with a clean sheet and in that we wrapped his body. I did not sew the sheet together, because I knew that he would not decay in the grave.

After that came Mary Magdalene and the other holy women. Angels, too, as many as the atoms of the sun, were there, showing their allegiance to their Creator. None can tell what sorrow I had at the time. I was like a woman giving birth who shakes in every limb of her body after delivery. Although she can scarcely breathe due to the pain, still she rejoices inwardly as much as she can because she knows that the child she has given birth to will never return to the same painful ordeal he has just left. In the same way, although no sorrow could compare with my sorrow over the death of my Son, still I rejoiced in my soul because I knew my Son would no longer die but would live forever.

Thus my sorrow was mixed with a measure of joy. I can truly say that there were two hearts in the one grave where my Son was buried. Is it not said: 'Where your treasure is, there is your heart as well'? Likewise, my heart and mind were constantly going to my Son's grave." Then the Mother of God went on to say: "I shall describe this man by way of a metaphor, how he was situated and in what kind of state and what his present situation is like. It is as though a virgin was betrothed to a man and two youths were standing before her. One of them, having been addressed by the virgin, said to her:

'I advise you not to trust the man to whom you are betrothed. He is unbending in his actions, tardy in payment, miserly in giving gifts. Rather, put your trust in me and in the words I speak to you, and I shall show you another man who is not hard but gentle in every way,

who gives you what you want right away and gives you plenty of pleasant and delightful gifts.'

The virgin, hearing this and thinking about it to herself, answered: 'Your words are good to hear. You yourself are gentle and attractive to my eyes. I think I will follow your advice.' When she took off her ring in order to give it to the youth, she saw three sayings inscribed on it. The first was: 'When you come to the top of the tree, beware lest you lay hold of a dry branch of the tree to support yourself and fall!' The second saying was: 'Beware lest you take advice from an enemy!'

The third saying was: 'Place not your heart between the teeth of a lion!' When the virgin saw these sayings, she pulled her hand back and held onto the ring, thinking to herself: 'These three sayings I see may perhaps mean that this man who wants to have me as his bride is not to be trusted. It seems to me that his words are empty; he is full of hatred and will kill me.' While she was thinking this, she looked again and noticed another inscription that also had three sayings.

The first saying was: 'Give to the one who gives to you!' The second saying was: 'Give blood for blood!' The third saying was: 'Take not from the owner what belongs to him!' When the virgin saw and heard this, she thought again to herself: 'The first three sayings inform me how I can escape death, the other three how I can obtain life. Therefore, it is right for me to follow the words of life.' Then the virgin prudently summoned to herself the servant of the man to whom she had first been betrothed. When he came, the man who wanted to deceive her withdrew from them.

So it is with the soul of that person who was betrothed to God. The two youths standing before the soul represent the friendship of God and the friendship of the world. The friends of the world have come closer to him up until now. They spoke to him of worldly riches and glory and he almost gave the ring of his love to them and consented to them in every way. But by the aid of my Son's grace he saw an inscription, that is, he heard the words of his mercy and understood three things through them. First, that he should beware

lest, the higher he rose and the more he relied on perishable things, the worse would be the fall that threatened him.

Second, he understood that there was nothing in the world but sorrow and care. Third, that his reward from the devil would be evil. Then he saw another inscription, I mean, he heard its consoling messages. The first message was that he should give his possessions to God from whom he had received them all. The second was that he should render the service of his own body to the man who had shed his blood for him. The third was that he should not alienate his soul from the God who had created and redeemed it. Now that he has heard and carefully considered these things, God's servants approach him and he is pleased with them, and the servants of the world draw away from him.

His soul is now like a virgin who has risen fresh from the arms of her bridegroom and who ought to have three things. First, she should have fine clothes so as not to be laughed at by the royal maidservants, should some defect be noticed in her clothes. Second, she should comply with the will of her bridegroom so as not to cause him any dishonor on her account, should anything dishonorable be discovered in her actions. Third, she should be completely clean lest the bridegroom discover in her any stain because of which he might scorn or repudiate her.

Let her also have people to guide her to the bridegroom's suite so as not to lose her way about the precincts or in the elaborate entrance. A guide should have two characteristics: first, the person following him should be able to see him; second, one should be able to hear his directions and where he steps. A person following another who leads the way should have three characteristics. First, he should not be slow and sluggish in following. Second, he should not hide himself from the person leading the way. Third, he should pay close attention and watch the footsteps of his guide and follow him eagerly. Thus, in order that his soul may reach the suite of the bridegroom, it is necessary that it be guided by the kind of guide who can successfully lead it to God his bridegroom.”

The glorious Virgin's doctrinal teaching to her daughter about spiritual and temporal wisdom and about which of them one ought to imitate, and about how spiritual wisdom leads a person to everlasting consolation, after a little struggle, while temporal wisdom leads to eternal damnation.

Chapter 22

Mary spoke: "It is written that 'if you would be wise you should learn wisdom from a wise person.' Accordingly, I give you the figurative example of a man who wanted to learn wisdom and saw two teachers standing before him. He said to them: 'I would really like to learn wisdom, if only I knew where it would lead me and of what use and purpose it is.' One of the teachers answered: 'If you would follow my wisdom, it will lead you up a high mountain along a path that is hard and rocky underfoot, steep and difficult to climb. If you struggle for this wisdom you will gain something that is dark on the outside but shining on the inside. If you hold onto it, you will secure your desire.

Like a circle that spins around, it will draw you to itself more and more, sweetly and ever more sweetly, until in time you are imbued with happiness from every side.' The second teacher said: 'If you follow my wisdom, it will lead you to a lush and beautiful valley with the fruits of every land. The path is soft underfoot and the descent is little trouble. If you persevere in this wisdom, you will gain something that is shiny on the outside, but when you want to use it, it will fly away from you. You will also have something that does not last but ends suddenly. A book, too, once you have read it through to the end, ceases to exist along with the act of reading, and you are left idle.'

When the man heard this, he thought to himself: 'I hear two amazing things. If I climb up the mountain, my feet get weak and my back grows heavy. Then, if I do obtain the thing that is dark on the outside, what good will it do me? If I struggle for something that has no end, when will there be any consolation for me? The other teacher promises something that is radiant on the outside but does not last, a kind of wisdom that will end with the reading of it. What use do I

have of things with no stability?' While he was thinking this in his mind, suddenly another man appeared between the two teachers and said: 'Although the mountain is high and difficult to climb, nevertheless there is a bright cloud above the mountain that will give you comfort.

If the promised container that is dark on the outside can somehow be broken, you will get the gold that is concealed within and you will be in happy possession of it forever.' These two teachers are two kinds of wisdom, namely the wisdom of the spirit and the wisdom of the flesh. The spiritual kind involves giving up your self-will for God and aspiring to the things of heaven with your every desire and action.

It cannot be truly called wisdom if your actions do not accord with your words. This kind of wisdom leads to a blessed life. But it involves a rocky approach and a steep climb, inasmuch as resisting your passions seems a hard and rocky way. It involves a steep climb to spurn habitual pleasures and not to love worldly honors. Although it is difficult, yet for the person who reflects on how little time there is and how the world will end and who fixes his mind constantly on God, above the mountain there will appear a cloud, that is, the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

A person worthy of the Holy Spirit's consolation is one who seeks no other consoler but God. How would all the elect have undertaken such hard and arduous tasks, if God's Spirit had not cooperated with their goodwill as with a good instrument? Their good will drew this Spirit to them, and the divine love they had for God invited it, for they struggled with heart and will until they were made strong in works.

They won the consolation of the Spirit and also soon obtained the gold of divine delight and love that not only made them able to bear a great many adversities but also made them rejoice in bearing them as they thought of their reward. Such rejoicing seems dark to the lovers of this world, for they love darkness. But to the lovers of God it is brighter than the sun and shines more than gold, for they break through the darkness of their vices and climb the mountain of patience, contemplating the cloud of that consolation that never ends but begins in the present and spins like a circle until it reaches

perfection. Worldly wisdom leads to a valley of misery that seems lush in its plenty, beautiful in reputation, soft in luxury. This kind of wisdom will end swiftly and offers no further benefit beyond what it used to see and hear.

Therefore, my daughter, seek wisdom from the wise one, I mean, from my Son! He is wisdom itself from whom all wisdom comes. He is the circle that never ends. I entreat you as a mother does her child: love the wisdom that is like gold on the inside but contemptible on the outside, that burns inside with love but requires effort on the outside and bears fruit through its works. If you worry about the burden of it all, God's Spirit will be your consoler.

Go and keep on trying like someone who keeps going on until the habit is acquired. Do not turn back until you reach the peak of the mountain! There is nothing so difficult that it does not become easy through steadfast and intelligent perseverance. There is no pursuit so noble at the outset that it does not fall into darkness by not being brought to completion. Advance, then, toward spiritual wisdom! It will lead you to physical toil, to despising the world, to a little pain, and to everlasting consolation. But worldly wisdom is deceitful and conceals a sting. It will lead you to the hoarding of temporary goods and to present prestige but, in the end, to the greatest unhappiness, unless you are wary and take careful precautions.”

The glorious Virgin's words explaining her humility to her daughter, and about how humility is likened to a cloak, and about the characteristics of true humility and its wonderful fruits.

Chapter 23

“Many people wonder why I speak with you. It is, of course, to show my humility. If a member of the body is sick, the heart is not content until it has regained its health, and once its health is restored the heart is all the more gladdened. In the same way, however much a person may sin, if he turns back to me with all his heart and a true

purpose of amendment, I am immediately prepared to welcome him when he comes. Nor do I pay attention to how much he may have sinned but to the intention and purpose he has when he returns.

Everyone calls me 'Mother of mercy.' Truly, my daughter, the mercy of my Son has made me merciful and the disclosure of his mercy has made me compassionate. For that reason, that person is miserable who, when she or he is able, does not have recourse to mercy. Come, therefore, my daughter, and hide yourself beneath my cloak! My cloak is contemptible on the outside but very useful on the inside, for three reasons. First, it shelters you from the stormy winds; second, it protects you from the burning cold; third, it defends you against the rain-showers from the sky.

This cloak is my humility. The lovers of the world hold this in contempt and think that imitating it is a silly superstition. What is more contemptible than to be called an idiot and not to get angry or answer in kind? What is more despicable than the giving up of everything and being in every way poor? What seems sorrier to worldly souls than to conceal one's own pain and to think and believe oneself unworthier and lowlier than everyone else? Such was my humility, my daughter. This was my joy, this my one desire. I only thought of how to please my Son. This humility of mine was useful for those who followed me in three ways.

First, it was useful in pestilent and stormy weather, that is, against human taunts and scorn. A powerful and violent storm wind pounds a person from all directions and makes him freeze. In the same way, taunting easily crushes an impatient person who does not reflect on future realities; it drives the soul away from charity. Anyone carefully studying my humility should consider the kinds of things I, the Queen of the universe, had to hear, and so he should seek my praise and not his own.

Let him recall that words are nothing but air and he will soon grow calm. Why are worldly people so unable to put up with verbal taunts, if not because they seek their own praise rather than God's? There is no humility in them, because their eyes are made bleary by

sin. Therefore, although the written law says one should not without due cause give one's ear to insulting speech or put up with it, still it is a virtue and a prize to listen patiently to and put up with insults for the sake of God.

Second, my humility is a protection from the burning cold, that is, from carnal friendship. For there is a kind of friendship in which a person is loved for the sake of present commodities, like those who speak in this way: 'Feed me for the present and I will feed you, for it is no concern of mine who feeds you after death! Give me respect and I will respect you, for it does not concern me in the least what kind of future respect there is to come.' This is a cold friendship without the warmth of God, as hard as frozen snow as regards loving and feeling compassion for one's fellow human being in need, and sterile is its reward.

Once a partnership is broken up and the desks are cleared away, the usefulness of that friendship immediately disappears and its profit is lost. Whoever imitates my humility, though, does good to everyone for the sake of God, to enemies and friends alike: to his friends, because they steadily persevere in honoring God; and to his enemies, because they are God's creatures and may become good in the future.

In the third place, the contemplation of my humility is a protection against rain-showers and the impurities coming from the clouds. Where do clouds come from, if not from the moisture and vapors coming from the earth? When they rise to the skies due to heat, they condense in the upper regions and, in this way, three things are produced: rain, hail, and snow. The cloud symbolizes the human body that comes from impurity. The body brings three things with it just as clouds do. The body brings hearing, seeing, and feeling. Because the body can see, it desires the things it sees. It desires good things and beautiful forms; it desires extensive possessions.

What are all these things if not a sort of rain coming from the clouds, staining the soul with a passion for hoarding, unsettling it with worries, distracting it with useless thoughts and upsetting it over the loss of its hoarded goods? Because the body can hear, it would fain

hear of its own glory and of the world's friendship. It listens to whatever is pleasant for the body and harmful to the soul. What do all these things resemble if not swiftly melting snow, making the soul grow cold toward God and blear-eyed as to humility?

Because the body has feeling, it would fain feel its own pleasure and physical rest. What does this resemble if not hail that is frozen from impure waters and that renders the soul unfruitful in the spiritual life, strong as regards worldly pursuits and soft as regards physical comforts? Therefore, if a person wants protection from this cloud, let him run for safety to my humility and imitate it. Through it, he is protected from the passion for seeing and does not desire illicit things; he is protected from the pleasure of hearing and does not listen to anything that goes against the truth; he is protected from the lust of the flesh and does not succumb to illicit impulses.

I assure you: The contemplation of my humility is like a good cloak that warms those wearing it; I mean those who not only wear it in theory but also in practice. A physical cloak does not give any warmth unless it is worn. Likewise, my humility does no good to those who just think about it, unless each one strives to imitate it, each in his own way. Therefore, my daughter, don the cloak of humility with all your strength, since worldly women wear cloaks that are a proud thing on the outside but are of little use on the inside. Avoid such garments altogether, since, if the love of the world does not first become abhorrent to you, if you are not continually thinking of God's mercy toward you and your ingratitude toward him, if you do not always have in mind what he has done and what you do, and the just sentence that awaits you in return, you will not be able to comprehend my humility.

Why did I humble myself so much or why did I merit such favor, if not because I considered and knew myself to be nothing and to have nothing in myself? This is also why I did not seek my own glory but only that of my Donor and Creator. Therefore, daughter, take refuge in the cloak of my humility and think of yourself as a sinner beyond all others! For, even if you see others who are wicked, you do not know what their future will be like tomorrow; you do not even know their

intention or their awareness of what they are doing, whether they do it out of weakness or deliberately. This is why you should not put yourself ahead of anyone and why you must not judge anyone in your heart.”

The Virgin's exhortation to her daughter, complaining about how few her friends are; and about how Christ speaks to the bride and describes his sacred words as flowers and explains who the people are in whom such words are to bear fruit.

Chapter 24

Mary was speaking: "Imagine a large army somewhere and a person walking alongside it heavily weighed down, carrying a great load on his back and in his arms. With his eyes full of tears, he might look at the army to see if there should be someone to have compassion on him and relieve his burden. That is the way I felt. From the birth of my Son until his death, my life was full of tribulation. I carried a heavy load on my back and persevered steadfastly in God's work and patiently bore everything that happened to me. I endured carrying a most heavy load in my arms, in the sense that I suffered more sorrow of heart and tribulation than any creature.

My eyes were full of tears when I contemplated the places in my Son's body destined for the nails as well as his future passion, and when I saw all the prophecies I had heard foretold by the prophets being fulfilled in him. And now I look around at everyone who is in the world to see if there happens to be some who might have compassion on me and be mindful of my sorrow, but I find very few who think about my sorrow and tribulation. This is why, my daughter, although I am forgotten and neglected by many people, you must not forget me! Look at my struggles and imitate them as far as you can! Contemplate my sorrow and tears and be sorry that the friends of God are so few. Stand firm! Look, my Son is coming.”

He came at once and said: "I who am speaking with you am your God and Lord. My words are like the flowers of a fine tree. Although

all the flowers spring up from the tree's one root, not all of them come to fruition. My words are like flowers that spring up from the root of divine charity. Many people take them, but they do not bear fruit in all of them nor reach maturity in them all. Some people take them and keep them for a time but later reject them, for they are ungrateful to my Spirit. Some take and keep them, for they are full of love, and the fruit of devotion and holy conduct is produced in them.

You, therefore, my bride, who are mine by divine right, must have three houses. In the first, there should be the necessary nourishment to enter the body; in the second the clothes that clothe the body on the outside; in the third the tools necessary for use in the house. In the first there should be three things: first, bread; then drink; and third, meats. In the second house there should be three things: first, linen clothing; then woolen; then the kind made by silkworms. In the third house there should also be three things: first tools and vessels to be filled with liquids; second, living instruments, such as horses and asses and the like, by which bodies can be conveyed; and, third, instruments that are moved by living beings.”

Christ's advice to the bride about the provisions in the three houses, and about how bread stands for a good will, drink for holy forethought, and meats for divine wisdom, and about how there is no divine wisdom in erudition but only in the heart and in a good life.

Chapter 25

“I who am speaking with you am the Creator of all things, created by none. There was nothing before me and there can be nothing after me, since I always was and always am. I am the Lord whose power none can withstand and from whom all power and sovereignty come. I speak to you as a man speaks to his wife: My wife, we should have three houses. In one of them there should be bread and drink and meats. But you might ask: What does this bread mean? Do I mean the bread that is on the altar? This is indeed bread, prior to the words “This is my body,” but, once the words have been spoken, it is not

bread but the body that I took from the Virgin and that was truly crucified on the cross. But here I do not mean that bread. The bread that we should store in our house is a good and sincere will. Physical bread, if it is pure and clean, has two good effects. First, it fortifies and gives strength to all the veins and arteries and muscles. Second, it absorbs any inner impurity, bringing it along for removal as it goes out, and so the person is cleansed. In this way a pure will gives strength.

If a person wishes for nothing but the things of God, works for nothing but the glory of God, desires with every desire to leave the world and to be with God, this intention strengthens him in goodness, increases his love for God, makes the world loathsome to him, fortifies his patience and reinforces his hope of inheriting glory to the extent that he cheerfully embraces everything that happens to him. In the second place, a good will removes every impurity. What is the impurity harmful to the soul if not pride, greed, and lust? However, when the impurity of pride or of some other vice enters the mind, it will leave, provided the person reasons in the following way: 'Pride is meaningless, since it is not the recipient who should be praised for goods given him, but the giver. Greed is meaningless, since all the things of earth will be left behind. Lust is nothing but filth. Therefore I do not desire these things but want to follow the will of my God whose reward will never come to an end, whose good gifts never grow old: Then every temptation to pride or greed will leave him and he will persevere in his good intention of doing good.

The drink we should have in our houses is holy forethought about everything to be done. Physical drink has two good effects. First, it aids good digestion. When a person proposes to do something good and, before doing it, considers to himself and turns carefully over in his mind what glory will come out of it for God, what benefit to his neighbor, what advantage to his soul, and does not want to do it unless he judges there to be some divine usefulness in his work, then that proposed work will turn out well or be, so to speak, well digested. Then, if any indiscretion occurs in the work he is doing, it is quickly detected. If anything is wrong, it is quickly corrected and his work will be upright and rational and edifying for others.

A person who does not show holy forethought in his work and does not seek benefit to souls or the glory of God, even if his work turns out well for a time, nevertheless it will come to nothing in the end. In the second place, drink quenches thirst. What kind of thirst is worse than the sin of base greed and anger? If a person thinks beforehand what usefulness will come of it, how wretchedly it will end, what reward there will be if he makes resistance, then that base thirst is soon quenched through God's grace, zealous love for God and good desires fill him, and joy arises because he has not done what came into his mind. He will examine the occasion and how he can avoid in the future those things by which he was almost tripped up, had he not had forethought, and he will be more careful in the future about avoiding such things. My bride, this is the drink that should be stored in our pantry.

Third, there should also be meats there. These have two effects. First, they taste better in the mouth and are better for the body than just bread alone. Second, they make for tenderer skin and better blood than if there were only bread and drink. Spiritual meat has a like effect. What do these meats symbolize? Divine wisdom, of course. Wisdom tastes very good to a person who has a good will and wants nothing but what God wants, showing holy forethought, doing nothing until he knows it to be for God's glory.

Now, you might ask: 'What is divine wisdom?' For many people are simple and only know one prayer - the Our Father, and not even that correctly. Others are very erudite and have wide knowledge. Is this divine wisdom? By no means. Divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition, but in the heart and a good life. That person is wise who reflects carefully on the path toward death, on how he will die, and on his judgment after death. That person has the meats of wisdom and the taste of a good will and holy forethought, who detaches himself from the vanity and superfluities of the world and contents himself with the bare necessities, and struggles in the love of God according to his abilities.

When a person reflects on his death and on his nakedness at death, when a person examines God's terrible court of judgment, where nothing is hidden and nothing is remitted without a punishment, when he also reflects on the instability and vanity of the world, will he not then rejoice and sweetly savor in his heart the surrender of his will to God together with his abstinence from sins? Is not his body strengthened and his blood improved, that is, is not every weakness of his soul, such as sloth and moral dissolution, driven away and the blood of divine love rejuvenated? This is because he reasons rightly that an eternal good is to be loved rather than a perishable one.

Therefore divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition but in good works, since many are wise in a worldly way and after their own desires but are altogether foolish with regard to God's will and commandments and the disciplining of their body. Such people are not wise but foolish and blind, for they understand perishable things that are useful for the moment, but they despise and forget the things of eternity. Others are foolish with regard to worldly delights and reputation but wise in considering the things that are of God, and they are fervent in his service.

Such people are truly wise, for they savor the precepts and will of God. They have truly been enlightened and keep their eyes open in that they are always considering in what way they may reach true life and light. Others, however, walk in darkness, and it seems to them more delightful to be in darkness than to inquire about the way by which they might come to the light. Therefore, my bride, let us store up these three things in our houses, namely a good will, holy forethought, and divine wisdom. These are the things that give us reason to rejoice. Although I speak my advice to you, by you I mean all my chosen ones in the world, since the righteous soul is my bride, for I am her Creator and Redeemer.”

The Virgin's advice to her daughter about life, and Christ's words to the bride about the clothes that should be kept in the second house, and about how these clothes denote the peace of God and the peace of one's neighbor and works of mercy and pure abstinence, and an excellent explanation of all these things.

Chapter 26

Mary spoke: "Place the brooch of my Son's passion firmly on yourself, just as St. Lawrence placed it firmly on himself. Each day he used to reflect in his mind as follows: 'My God is my Lord, I am his servant. The Lord Jesus Christ was stripped and mocked. How can it be right for me, his servant, to be clothed in finery? He was scourged and fastened to the wood. It is not right, then, that I, who am his servant, if I really am his servant, should have no pain or tribulation.' When he was stretched out over the coals and liquid fat ran down into the fire and his whole body caught fire, he looked up with his eyes toward heaven and said: 'Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, my God and Creator!'

I know I have not lived my days well. I know I have done little for your glory. This is why, seeing that your mercy is great, I ask you to deal with me according to your mercy.' And at this word his soul was separated from his body. Do you see, my daughter? He loved my Son so much and endured such suffering for his glory that he still said he was unworthy of reaching heaven. How then can those people who live by their own desires be worthy? Therefore, keep ever in mind the passion of my Son and of his saints. They did not endure such sufferings for no reason, but in order to give others an example of how to live and to show what a strict payment will be demanded for sins by my Son who does not want there to be the least sin without correction."

Then the Son came and spoke to the bride, saying: "I told you earlier what should be stored in our houses. Among other things, there should be clothing of three kinds: first, clothing made of linen, which is produced in and grows from the earth; second, that made of leather, which comes from animals; third, that made of silk, which comes from silkworms. Linen clothing has two good effects. First, it is soft and gentle against the naked body. Second, it does not lose its color, but the more it is washed, the cleaner it becomes. The second kind of clothing, that is, leather, has two effects.

First, it covers a person's shame; second, it provides warmth against the cold. The third kind of clothing, that is, silken, also has two effects. First, it can be seen to be very beautiful and fine; second, it is very expensive to buy. The linen clothes that are good for the naked parts of the body symbolize peace and concord. A devout soul should wear this with respect to God, so that she can be at peace with God both by not wanting anything other than what God wants or in a different way than he wants, and by not exacerbating him through sins, since there is no peace between God and the soul unless she stops sinning and controls her concupiscence.

She should also be at peace with her neighbor, that is, by not causing him problems, by helping him if he has problems, and by being patient if he sins against her. What is a more unfortunate strain on the soul than always to be longing to sin and never to have enough of it, always to be desiring and never at rest? What stings the soul more sharply than to be angry with her neighbor and to envy his goods? This is why the soul should be at peace with God and with her neighbor, since nothing can be more restful than resting from sin and not being anxious about the world, nothing gentler than rejoicing in the good of one's neighbor and wishing for him what one wishes for oneself.

This linen clothing should be worn over the naked parts of the body, because, more properly and importantly than the other virtues, peace should be lodged closer to the heart, which is where God wants to take his rest. This is the virtue that God instills and keeps instilled in the heart. Like linen, this peace is born in and grows from the earth, since true peace and patience spring up from the consideration of one's own weakness. A man who is of the earth ought to consider his own weakness, namely that he is quick to anger if offended, quick to feel pain if hurt. And if he reflects in this way he will not do unto another what he himself cannot bear, reflecting to himself that: 'Just as I am weak, so too is my neighbor.

Just as I do not want to put up with such things, neither does he.' Next, peace does not lose its color, that is, its stability, but stays

increasingly constant, since, considering his neighbor's weakness in himself, he becomes more willing to put up with injuries. If a man's peace gets soiled by impatience in any way, it grows ever cleaner and brighter before God the more frequently and quickly it is washed through penance. He also becomes so much the happier and more prudent in toleration, the more often he gets irritated and then gets washed again, since he rejoices in the hope of the reward that he hopes will come to him on account of his inner peace, and he is all the more careful about not letting himself fall due to impatience.

The second kind of clothing, namely leather, denotes works of mercy. These leather clothes are made from the skins of dead animals. What do these animals symbolize if not my saints, who were as simple as animals? The soul should be covered with their skins, that is, she should imitate and carry out their works of mercy. These have two effects. First, they cover the shame of the sinful soul and cleanse her so as not to appear stained in my sight. Second, they defend the soul against the cold. What is the cold of the soul if not the soul's hardness with respect to my love? Works of mercy are effective against such coldness, wrapping the soul so that she does not perish from the cold. Through these works God visits the soul, and the soul comes ever closer to God.

The third kind of clothing, that made of silk by silkworms, which seems very expensive to buy, denotes the pure habit of abstinence. This is beautiful in the sight of God and the angels and men. It is also expensive to buy, since it seems hard to people to restrain their tongue from idle and excessive talk. It seems hard to restrain the appetite of the flesh from superfluous excess and pleasure. It also seems hard to go against one's own will. But although it may be hard, it is in every way useful and beautiful. This is why, my bride, in whom I mean all the faithful, in our second house we should store up peace toward God and neighbor, works of mercy through compassion on and help for the wretched, and abstinence from concupiscence.

Although the latter is more expensive than the rest, it is also so much more beautiful than the other clothes that no other virtue seems beautiful without it. This abstinence should be produced by

silkworms, that is, by the consideration of one's excesses against God, by humility, and by my own example of abstinence, for I became like a worm for the sake of humankind. A person should examine in his spirit how and how often he has sinned against me and in what way he has made amends. Then he will discover by himself that no amount of toil and abstinence on his part can make amends for the number of times he has sinned against me.

He should also ponder my sufferings and those of my saints as well as the reason why I endured such sufferings. Then he will truly understand that, if I demand such a strict repayment from my saints, who have obeyed me, how much more I will demand in vengeance from those who have not obeyed me. A good soul should therefore readily undertake to practice abstinence, recalling that her sins are evil and surround the soul like worms. Thus, from these low worms she will collect precious silk, that is, the pure habit of abstinence in all her limbs. God and all the host of heaven rejoice in this. Eternal joy will be awarded to the person storing this up who would otherwise have had eternal grief, had abstinence not come to his assistance.”

Christ's words to the bride about the instruments in the third house, and about how such instruments symbolize good thoughts, disciplined senses, and true confession; there is also given an excellent explanation of all these things in general and about the locks of these houses.

Chapter 27

The Son of God spoke to the bride, saying: ”I told you earlier that there should be instruments of three kinds in the third house. First, instruments or vessels into which liquids are poured. Second, instruments with which the land outside is prepared, such as hoes and axes and tools for repairing things that get broken. Third, living instruments, such as asses and horses and the like for conveying both the living and the dead. In the first house, where there are liquids, there should be two kinds of instruments or vessels: first those into which sweet and fluid substances are poured, such as water and oil

and wine and the like; second, those into which pungent or thick substances are poured, such as mustard and flour and the like. Do you understand what these things signify? The liquids refer to the good and bad thoughts of the soul.

A good thought is like sweet oil and like delicious wine. A bad thought is like bitter mustard that makes the soul bitter and base. Bad thoughts are like the thick liquids that a person sometimes needs. Although they are not much good for nourishing the body, still they are beneficial for the purgation and curing of both body and brain. Although bad thoughts do not fatten and heal the soul like the oil of good thoughts, still they are good for the purgation of the soul, just as mustard is good for the purgation of the brain. If bad thoughts did not sometimes get in the way, human beings would be angels and not human, and they would think they got everything from themselves.

Therefore, in order that a man might understand his weakness, which comes from himself, and the strength that comes from me, it is sometimes necessary that my great mercy allows him to be tempted by bad thoughts. So long as he does not consent to them, they are a purgation for the soul and a protection for his virtues. Although they may be as pungent to take as mustard, still they are very healing for the soul and lead it toward eternal life and toward the kind of health that cannot be gained without some bitterness. Therefore, let the vessels of the soul, where the good thoughts are placed, be carefully prepared and always kept clean, since it is useful that even bad thoughts arise both as a trial and for the sake of gaining greater merit. However, the soul should strive diligently so as not to consent to them or delight in them. Otherwise the sweetness and the development of the soul will be lost and only bitterness will remain.

In the second house there should also be instruments of two kinds: first, outdoor instruments, such as the plow and the hoe, to prepare the ground outside for sowing and to root up brambles; second, instruments useful for both indoor and outdoor purposes, such as axes and the like. The instruments for cultivating the soil symbolize the human senses. These should be used for the benefit of one's neighbor just as the plow is used on the soil. Bad people are like the

soil of the earth, for they are always thinking in an earthly fashion. They are barren of compunction for their sins, because they think nothing is a sin. They are cold in their love for God, because they seek nothing but their own will.

They are heavy and sluggish when it comes to doing good, because they are eager for worldly reputation. This is why a good person should cultivate them through his exterior senses, just as a good farmer cultivates the earth with a plow. First, he should cultivate them with his mouth, by saying things to them that are useful for the soul and by instructing them about the path to life; next, by doing the good deeds he can. His neighbor can be formed in this way by his words and motivated to do good. Next, he should cultivate his neighbor by means of the rest of his body in order that he may bear fruit.

He does this through his innocent eyes that do not look on unchaste things, so that his unchaste neighbor may also learn modesty in his whole body. He should cultivate him by means of his ears that do not listen to unsuitable things as well by means of his feet that are quick to do the work of God. I, God, shall give the rain of my grace to the soil thus cultivated by the work of the cultivator, and the laborer shall rejoice over the fruit of the once barren earth as it begins to put forth shoots.

The instruments needed for indoor preparations, such as the ax and similar tools, signify a discerning intention and the holy examination of one's work. Whatever good a person does should not be done for the sake of reputation and human praise but out of love for God and for the sake of an eternal reward. This is why a person should carefully examine his works and with what intention and for what reward he has done them. If he should discover any kind of pride in his works, let him immediately cut it out with the ax of discretion.

In this way, just as he cultivates his neighbor who is, as it were, outside the house, that is, outside the company of my friends due to his bad deeds, so too he may bear fruit for himself on the inside through divine love. Just as the work of a farmer will soon come to

naught if he has no instruments with which to repair things that have been broken, so too, unless a person examines his work with discernment, and how it may be lightened if it is too burdensome or how it may be improved if it has failed, he will achieve no results. Accordingly, one should not only work effectively outdoors, one must also consider attentively on the inside how and with what intention one works.

There should be living instruments in the third house to convey the living and the dead, such as horses and asses and other animals. These instruments signify true confession. This conveys both living and dead. What does living denote if not the soul that has been created by my divinity and lives forever? This soul comes closer and closer to God each day through a true confession. Just as an animal becomes a stronger beast of burden and more beautiful to behold the more often and better it is fed, so too confession - the more often it is used and the more carefully it is made as to both lesser and greater sins - conveys the soul increasingly forward and is so pleasing to God that it leads the soul to God's very heart. What are the dead things conveyed by confession, if not the good works that die through mortal sin? Good works dying through mortal sins are dead in the sight of God, for nothing good can please God unless sin is first corrected either through a perfect intention or in deed.

It is not good to combine sweet-smelling and stinking substances in the same vessel. If anyone kills his good works through mortal sins and makes a true confession of his crimes with the intention to improve and to avoid sin in the future, his good works, which earlier were dead, come to life again through confession and the virtue of humility and they gain him merit for eternal salvation. If he dies without making confession, although his good works cannot die or be destroyed but cannot merit eternal life due to mortal sin, still they can merit a lighter punishment for him or contribute to the salvation of others, provided he has done the good works with a holy intention and for the glory of God. However, if he has done the works for the sake of worldly glory and his own benefit, then his works will die when their doer dies, inasmuch as he has received his reward from the world on whose behalf he labored.

Therefore, my bride, by whom I mean all my friends, we should store up in our houses those things that give rise to the spiritual delight God wants to have with a holy soul. In the first house, we should store, first, the bread of a sincere will that wants nothing but what God wants; second, the drink of holy forethought by not doing anything unless it is thought to be for God's glory; third, the meats of divine wisdom by always thinking on the life to come and on how the present should be ordered.

In the second house, let us store up the peace of not sinning against God and the peace of not quarreling with our neighbor; second, works of mercy through which we may be of practical benefit to our neighbor; third, perfect abstinence by which we restrain those things that tend to disturb our peace. In the third house, we should store up wise and good thoughts in order to decorate our home on the inside; second, temperate, well-disciplined senses to be a light for our neighbors on the outside; third, true confession that helps us to revive, should we grow weak.

Though we have the houses, the things stored in them cannot be kept safe without doors, and doors cannot swing without hinges or be locked without locks. This is why, in order that the stored goods be kept safe, the house needs the door of steadfast hope so as not to be broken down by adversity. This hope should have two hinges in order that a person may not despair of achieving glory or of escaping punishment, but always in every adversity have the hope of better things, being confident in the mercy of God. The lock should be divine charity that secures the door against the entrance of the enemy.

What good is it to have a door without a lock, or hope without love? If someone hopes for eternal rewards and in the mercy of God, but does not love and fear God, he has a door without a lock through which his mortal enemy can enter whenever he likes and kill him. But true hope is when a person who hopes also does the good deeds he can. Without these good deeds he cannot attain heaven, that is, if he knew and was able to do them but did not want to.

If anyone realizes that he has committed a transgression or has not done what he could, he should make the good resolution of doing what good he can. As to what he cannot do, let him hope firmly that he will be able to come to God thanks to his good intention and love for God. So, let the door of hope be secured with divine charity in such away that, just as a lock has many catches inside to prevent the enemy from opening it, this charity for God should also entail the concern not to offend God, the loving fear of being separated from him, the fiery zeal to see God loved, and the desire to see him imitated. It should also entail sorrow, for a person is not able to do as much as he would like or knows he is obliged to do, and humility, which makes a person think nothing of all that he accomplishes in comparison to his sins.

Let the lock be made strong by these catches, so that the devil cannot easily open the lock of charity and insert his own love. The key to open and close the lock should be the desire for God alone, along with divine charity and holy works, so that a person does not wish to have anything except God, even if he can get it, and all this because of his great charity. This desire encloses God in the soul and the soul in God, since their wills are one.

The wife and husband alone should have this key, that is, God and the soul, so that, as often as God wants to come in and enjoy good things, namely the virtues of the soul, he may have free access with the key of stable desire; as often again as the soul wants to go into the heart of God, she may do so freely, since she desires nothing but God. This key is kept by the vigilance of the soul and the custody of her humility, by which she ascribes every good she has to God. And this key is kept also by the power and charity of God, lest the soul be overturned by the devil.

Behold, my bride, what love God has for souls! Stand therefore firm and do my will!"

Christ's words to the bride about his unchanging nature and about how his words are accomplished, even if they are not immediately followed by deeds; and about how our will should be wholly entrusted to God's will.

Chapter 28

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "Why are you so upset because that man claimed my words were false? Am I worse off because of his disparagement or would I be better off because of his praise? I am, of course, unchangeable and can become neither greater nor less, and I have no need of praise. A person who praises me does gain a benefit from his praise of me, not for me but for himself. I am truth, and falsehood never proceeds or can proceed from my lips, since everything I have said through the prophets or other friends of mine, whether in spirit or in body, is accomplished as I intended it at the time.

My words were not false if I said one thing at one time, another at another time, first something more explicit, then something more obscure. The explanation is that, in order to prove the reliability of my faith as well as the zeal of my friends, I revealed much that could be understood in different ways, both well and badly, by good and bad people according to the different effects of my Spirit, thus giving them the possibility of carrying out different good acts in their different circumstances.

Just as I assumed a human nature into one person in my divine nature, so too I have also spoken at times through my human nature as being subject to my divine nature, but at other times through my divine nature as the Creator of my human nature, as is clear from my gospel. And in this way, although ignorant people or detractors might see divergent meanings in them, still they are true words in agreement with truth. It was also not unreasonable for me to have handed down some things in an obscure manner, since it was right that my plan should in some way be hidden from the wicked, and at the same time that all good people should eagerly hope for my grace and obtain the reward for their hope. Otherwise, if it had been implied that my plan would come about at a specific point in time, then everyone would have given up both their hopes and their charity due to the great length of time.

I also promised a number of things that, however, did not occur because of the ingratitude of the people then living. Had they left off their evildoing, I would certainly have given them what I had promised. This is why you ought not be upset over claims that my words are lies. For what seems to be humanly impossible is possible for me. My friends are also surprised that the words are not followed up by deeds. But this, again, is not unreasonable.

Was not Moses sent to Pharaoh? Yet signs did not immediately follow. Why? Because, if the signs and portents had immediately followed, neither the hardheartedness of Pharaoh nor the power of God would have been manifested nor would the miracles have been clearly shown. Pharaoh would still have been condemned for his own wickedness, even if Moses had not come, although his hardheartedness would not have been so manifest. This is also what is happening now. So, be brave! The plow, though drawn by oxen, is still steered by the will of the plowman. Likewise, although you may hear and know my words, they do not turn out or get accomplished according to your will, but according to mine. For I know the lay of the land and how it should be cultivated. But you should entrust all your will to me and say: 'May your will be done!' ”

John the Baptist admonishes the bride through a parable in which God is symbolized by a magpie, the soul by its chicks, the body by its nest, worldly pleasures by wild animals, pride by birds of prey, worldly mirth by a snare.

Chapter 29

John the Baptist spoke to the bride, saying: ”The Lord Jesus has called you out of darkness into light, from impurity into perfect purity, from a narrow into a broad place. Who is able to explain these gifts or how could you thank him as much as you should for them? Just do all that you can! There is a kind of bird called a magpie. She loves her chicks, because the eggs from which the chicks came were once in her

womb. This bird makes a nest for herself out of old and used things for three purposes.

First, as a resting place; second, as a shelter from rain and heavy drought; third, in order to feed her young when they are hatched from the eggs. The bird hatches her young by lovingly settling herself on top of the eggs. When the chicks are born, the mother entices them to fly in three ways. First, by the distribution of food; second, by her solicitous voice; third, by the example of her own flying. Since they love their mother, the chicks, once they have got used to their mother's food, first travel little by little beyond the nest with their mother leading the way. Then they go further away as their strength allows, until they become accomplished in the use and skill of flight.

This bird stands for God, who exists eternally and never changes. From the womb of his divinity all rational souls proceed. A nest is prepared for each soul out of used things, inasmuch as the soul is joined to a body of earth through which God nourishes it with the food of good affections, defends it from the birds of evil thoughts, and gives it respite from the rain of bad actions. Each soul is joined to the body in order that it may rule the body and nowise be ruled by it and so that it may spur the body to struggle and provide for it intelligently. Thus, like a good mother, God teaches the soul to advance toward better things, and teaches it to leave its confinement for broader spaces. First, he feeds it by giving it intelligence and reason according to each one's capacity, and by pointing out to the mind what it should choose and what it should avoid.

As the magpie first leads its chicks beyond the nest, so too the human person first learns to think thoughts of heaven, and also to think how confined and base the nest of the body is, how bright the heavens and how delightful eternal things are. God also leads the soul out with his voice when he calls: 'He who follows me will have life; he who loves me will not die.' This voice leads toward heaven. Anyone who does not hear it is either deaf or ungrateful for his mother's love. Third, God leads the soul out through his own flying, that is, through the example of his human nature. This glorious human nature had, as it were, two wings. Its first wing was that there was

only purity and no defilement in it; its second wing was that he did all things well. Upon these two wings God's human nature flew through the world. For this reason, the soul should follow them as far as it can, and if it cannot do so in deeds, let it at least try to do so in intention.

When the young chick is flying, it has to beware of three dangers. The first is wild animals. It must not land next to them on the ground, because the chick is not as strong as they are. Second, it must beware of birds of prey, since the chick does not yet fly as swiftly as those birds do, which is why it is safer to stay in hiding. Third, it should take care not to be lured by a baited snare. The wild animals that I mentioned are worldly pleasures and appetites. The young chick should beware of them, for they seem good to know, fine to own, beautiful to behold. But when you think you have got hold of them, they quickly go away. When you think they give you pleasure, they bite you without mercy.

In the second place, the chick should beware of birds of prey. These represent pride and ambition. These are the birds that always want to rise higher and higher and to be ahead of the other birds and hate all those behind them. The chick should beware of them and should want to remain in humble hiding, so that it does not grow proud of the grace it has received or despise those that are behind it and have less grace, and does not think itself better than others. Third, the chick should beware of being lured by a baited snare. This represents worldly mirth. It may seem good to have laughter on one's lips and pleasant sensations in one's body, but there is a barb in these things. Immoderate laughter leads to immoderate mirth, and the pleasure of the body leads to inconstancy of mind, which gives rise to sadness, either at death or earlier, along with distress. You should therefore hurry, my daughter, to leave your nest through the desire for heaven! Beware of the beasts of desire and the birds of pride! Beware of the bait of empty mirth!"

Then the Mother spoke to the bride and said: "Beware of the bird that is daubed with pitch, for anyone who touches it gets stained. This represents worldly ambition, unstable as the air, repulsive in its way of seeking favor and keeping bad company. Care nothing for honors, do

not bother about favors, pay no attention to praise or reproach! From these things come inconstancy of soul and the lessening of love for God. Be steadfast! God, who has begun to bring you out of the nest, will keep nourishing you until death. After death, however, you will hunger no more. He will also protect you from sorrow and defend you in life, and after death you will have nothing to fear.”

The Mother's entreaty to her Son for his bride and for another holy person, and about how the Mother's entreaty is received by Christ, and about certainty regarding the truth or falsity of a person's holiness in this life.

Chapter 30

Mary spoke to her Son saying: ”My Son, grant your new bride the gift that your most worthy body may take root in her heart, so that she herself may be changed into you and be filled with your delight!” Then she said: ”This holy man, when he was living in time, was as steadfast in the holy faith as a mountain unbroken by adversity, undistracted by pleasure. He was as flexible toward your will as the moving air, wherever the force of your Spirit led him. He was as ardent in your love as fire, warming those grown cold and overtaking the wicked. Now his soul is with you in glory, but the vessel he used is buried and lies in a more humble place than is fitting. Therefore, my Son, raise his body up to a higher station, do it honor, for it honored you in its own small way, raise it up, for it raised you up on high as much as it could by means of its toil!”

The Son answered: ”Blessed are you, who overlook nothing in the affairs of your friends. You see, Mother, it is no use for good food to be given to wolves. It is not right to bury in mud the sapphire that keeps all the members healthy and strengthens the weak. It is no use to light a candle for the blind. This man was indeed steadfast in faith and fervent in charity, just as he was ready to do my will with the greatest of continence. Therefore, he tastes to me like good food prepared through patience and tribulation, sweet and good in the goodness of his will and affections, even better in his manly struggles to improve,

excellent and most sweet in his praiseworthy way of finishing his works. Therefore it is not right for such food to be lifted up before wolves, whose greed is never sated, whose lust for pleasure flees from the herbs of virtue and thirsts for rotten meat, whose shrewd speech is harmful to everyone.

He resembled the sapphire of a ring through the brightness of his life and reputation, proving himself to be a bridegroom of his church, a friend of his Lord, a preserver of the holy faith and a scorner of the world. Therefore, dear Mother, it is not right for such a lover of virtue and so pure a bridegroom to be touched by impure creatures, or for so humble a friend to be handled by lovers of the world. In the third place, by his fulfillment of my commandments and by the teaching of a good life, he was like a lamp on a lampstand. Through this teaching, he strengthened those who were standing, lest they fall. Through this teaching he raised up those who were falling down. Through it he also offered inspiration to those who would come after him to seek me.

They are unworthy to see this light, blinded as they are by their own love. They are unable to perceive this light, for their eyes are sick with pride. People with scabby hands cannot touch this light. This light is hateful to the greedy and to those who love their own will. This is why, before he can be raised up to a higher station, justice requires those who are unclean to be purified and those who are blind to be enlightened.

However, regarding that man whom the people of the earth are calling a saint, three things show that he was not holy. The first is that he did not imitate the life of the saints before he died; second, that he was not joyfully ready to suffer martyrdom for God's sake; third, that he did not have an ardent and discerning charity like the saints. Three things make someone appear holy to the crowd. The first is the lie of a deceiving and ingratiating man; the second is the easy credulity of the foolish; the third is the cupidity and lukewarmness of prelates and examiners. Whether he is in hell or in purgatory is not given you to know until the time comes for telling it."

Book 3

Warnings and instructions to the bishop about how to eat and dress and pray, and about how he should behave before meals, at meals, and after meals, and likewise about his sleep and how he should carry out the office of bishop always and everywhere.

Chapter 1

“Jesus Christ, God and man, who came to earth in order to take on a human nature and save souls through his blood, who disclosed the true way to heaven and opened its gates, he himself has sent me to all of you. Hear, daughter, you to whom it has been given to hear spiritual truths. If this bishop proposes to walk the narrow path taken by few and to be one of those few, let him first lay aside the burden that besets him and weighs him down - I mean his worldly desires - by using the world only for needs consistent with the modest sustenance of a bishop. This is what that good man Matthew did when he was called by God.

Leaving behind the heavy burden of the world, he found a light burden. In the second place, the bishop should be girded for the journey, to use the words of scripture. Tobias was ready for his journey when he found the angel standing there girded. What does it mean to say that the angel was girded? It means that every bishop should be girded with the belt of justice and divine charity, ready to walk the same path as he who said: 'I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep.' He should be ready to speak the truth in his words, ready to perform justice in his actions both regarding himself and regarding others, not neglecting justice due to threats and taunts or false friendships or empty fears. To each bishop thus girded shall Tobias, that is, the righteous, come and they shall follow on his path.

In the third place, he should eat bread and water before he undertakes his journey, just as we read about Elijah, who, aroused from sleep, found

bread and water at his head. What is this bread given to the prophet if not the material and spiritual goods bestowed upon him? For material bread was given to him in the desert as a lesson. Although God could have sustained the prophet without material food, he wanted material bread to be prepared for him so that people might understand it to be God's wish that they make use of God's good gifts in temperate fashion for the solace of the body. Moreover, an infusion of the Spirit inspired the prophet when he went on for forty days in the strength of that food. For, if no interior unction of grace had been inspired in his mind, he would certainly have given up during the toil of those forty days, for in himself he was weak but in God he had the strength to complete such a journey.

Therefore, inasmuch as man lives by God's every word, we urge the bishop to take the morsel of bread, that is, to love God above all things. He will find this morsel at his head, in the sense that his own reason tells him that God is to be loved above all things and before all things, both because of creation and redemption and also because of his enduring patience and goodness. We bid him also to drink a little water, that is, to think inwardly on the bitterness of Christ's passion. Who is worthy enough to be able to meditate on the agony of Christ's human nature, which he was suffering at the moment when he prayed for the chalice of the passion to be taken from him and when drops of his blood were flowing to the ground? The bishop should drink this water together with the bread of charity and he will be strengthened for journeying along the path of Jesus Christ.

Once the bishop has set out on the path to salvation, if he wants to make further progress, it is useful for him to give thanks to God with all his heart from the very first hour of the day, considering his own actions carefully and asking God for help to carry out his will.

Then, when he is getting dressed, he should pray in this manner: 'Ashes must with ashes be, dust with dust. Yet, since I am bishop by the providence of God, I am putting these clothes made from the dust of the earth on you, my body, not for the sake of beauty or ostentation but as a covering, so that your nakedness might not be seen. Nor do I care whether your clothing is better or worse, but only that the bishop's habit should be

acknowledged out of reverence for God, and that through his habit the bishop's authority may be recognized for the correction and instruction of others. And so, kind God, I beg you to give me steadfastness of mind so that I do not take pride in my precious ashes and dust nor foolishly glory in the colors of mere dust. Grant me fortitude so that, just as a bishop's garb is more distinguished and respected than that of others due to his divine authority, the garb of my soul may be acceptable before God, lest I be thrust down all the deeper for having held authority in an undistinguished and unworthy manner or lest I be ignominiously stripped for having foolishly worn my venerable garb to my own damnation.'

After that he should read or sing the hours. The higher the rank a person rises to, the more glory he or she should render to God. However, a pure heart pleases God just as much in silence as in singing, provided a person is occupied with other righteous and useful tasks. After Mass has been said, the bishop should fulfill his episcopal duties, taking diligent care not to give more attention to material things than to spiritual. When he comes to the dinner table, this should be his thought: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, you command that the corruptible body be sustained with material food, help me to give my body what it needs in such a way that the flesh does not grow shamelessly insolent against the soul due to superfluous eating nor sluggish in your service out of imprudent abstinence.

Inspire in me a suitable moderation so that when this man of earth nourishes himself with things of the earth, the Lord of the earth may not be provoked to anger by his creature of earth.' While at table, the bishop is allowed to have the kind of moderate refreshment and conversation in which foolish vanity is avoided and no word is uttered or heard that may offer the hearers an occasion of sin. Rather, it should all be proper and salutary.

If bread and wine are missing from the material table, everything loses its taste; in the same way, if good doctrine and exhortation are missing from the episcopal and spiritual table, everything set on it seems tasteless to the soul. And so, in order to avoid any occasion of frivolity, something should be read or recited at table that can be of profit to those seated there.

When the meal is ended and the thanksgiving blessing has been prayed to God, the bishop should plan what he has to do or read books that can lead him on toward spiritual perfection. After dinner, though, he may entertain himself with the companions of his household. However, just as a mother giving milk to her baby anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until she weans the baby from milk and accustoms it to solid foods, so too the bishop should bring his companions closer to God through the kind of conversation by which they may come to fear and love God, becoming in this way not only their father through the divine authority in him but also their mother through the spiritual formation he gives them.

If he is consciously aware that anyone in his household is in the state of mortal sin and has not repented despite admonishments, then he should separate himself from him. If he retains him out of convenience and temporal consolation, he will have no immunity from the other's sin. When he goes to bed, he should carefully examine the deeds and impressions of the day that has gone, thinking the following thoughts: 'O God, Creator of my body and soul, look on me in your mercy.'

Grant me your grace, so that I do not grow lukewarm in your service by oversleeping nor grow weak in your service due to disturbed sleep, but grant me for your glory that measure of sleep that you have prescribed for us in order to give the body rest. Give me fortitude so that my enemy, the devil, may not disturb me nor drag me away from your goodness.' When he gets up out of bed, he should wash away in confession any lapses that the flesh may have suffered, so that the sleep of the following night might not begin with the sins of the previous."

The Virgin's words to her daughter about the opportune solution to the difficulties meeting the bishop on the narrow path, and about how patience is symbolized by clothing and the Ten Commandments by ten fingers, and the longing for eternity and the distaste for worldliness by two feet, and about three enemies to the bishop along his way.

Chapter 2

Again the Mother of God speaks: "Tell the bishop that, if he sets out on this path, he will meet with three difficulties. The first difficulty is that it is a narrow path; the second, that there are sharp thorns on it; the third, that it is a rocky and uneven path. I will give you three pieces of advice in this regard. The first is that the bishop should wear rugged and tightly knit clothes in preparation for the narrow path. The second is that he should hold his ten fingers in front of his eyes and look through them as through bars so as not to be scratched by the thorns.

The third is that he should step cautiously and test each and every step he takes to see if his foot gets a firm hold when he sets it down, and he should not hastily set down both feet at the same time without first assuring himself of the condition of the path. This narrow path symbolizes nothing other than the malice of wicked people toward the righteous, the kind of people who deride righteous deeds and pervert the paths and upright warnings of the righteous, who give little weight to anything having to do with humility and piety. In order to confront such people the bishop should clothe himself in the garment of steadfast patience, since patience makes burdens pleasant and joyfully accepts the insults it receives.

The thorns symbolize nothing other than the hardships of the world. In order to confront them, the ten fingers of God's commandments and counsels should be held up so that, when the thorn of hardship and poverty scratches him, he may recall the sufferings and poverty of Christ. When the thorn of anger and envy scratches him, he should recall the love of God that we are commanded to keep. True love does not insist on getting what is its own, but opens itself up wholly to the glory of God and the benefit of one's neighbor.

That the bishop ought to step cautiously means that he should everywhere have an attitude of intelligent caution. For a good person should have two feet, so to speak. One foot is a longing for eternity. The other is a distaste for the world. His longing for eternity should be

circumspect, in the sense that he must not long for eternal things for himself alone as though he were worthy of them; rather, he should place all his longing and desire as well as his reward in the hands of God. His distaste for the world should be cautious and full of fear, in the sense that this distaste must not be the result of his hardships in the world or impatience with life nor should it be for the sake of living a quieter life or being released from carrying out work beneficial to others. Rather, it should only be the result of his abhorrence of sin and his longing for eternity.

Once these three difficulties have been overcome, I would warn the bishop about three enemies on his path. You see, the first enemy tries to whistle in the bishop's ears so as to block his hearing. The second stands in front of him in order to scratch out his eyes. The third enemy is at his feet, shouting loudly and holding a noose in order to ensnare his feet when he lifts them off the ground. The first are those people or those impulses that try to draw the bishop away from the right path, saying: 'Why do you take so much work on yourself and why are you making your way on so narrow a path? Go off instead to the verdant path where so many people are walking. What does it matter to you how this person or those people behave? Why do you bother to offend or censure those people who could honor and appreciate you? If they do not offend you and those close to you, what do you care how they live or whether they are offending God? If you yourself are a good man, why do you bother to be judging others? Better to exchange gifts and services! Make use of human friendships in order to win praise and a good reputation during your lifetime.'

The second enemy wants to blind you like the Philistines did Samson. This enemy is worldly beauty and possessions, sumptuous clothing, the various trappings of pomp, human privileges and favors. When such things are presented to you and please the eyes, reason is blinded, love for God's commandments grows lukewarm, sin is carried out freely and, once committed, is taken lightly. Therefore, when the bishop has a moderate supply of necessary goods, he should be content. For all too many people nowadays find it more pleasant to stand around with Samson at the

millstone of desire rather than to love the church with a praiseworthy disposition for pastoral ministry.

The third enemy shouts loudly and carries a noose and says: 'Why are you walking with such caution and with your head bowed down? Why do you humble yourself so much, you who should be and could be honored by many people? Be a priest so as to sit among those of the first rank! Be a bishop so as to be honored by the many! Advance to higher ranks in order to obtain better service and enjoy greater relaxation! Store up a treasure with which you can help yourself as well as others and be comforted by others in return and happy wherever you are!'

When the heart becomes inclined to such feelings and suggestions, the mind soon steps toward earthly appetites, lifting as it were the foot of base desire, with which it gets so entangled in the trap of worldly care that it can scarcely rise up to the consideration of its own wretchedness or to that of the rewards and punishments of eternity. Nor is this surprising, since scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task for the honor of God. Now, however, there are many who want the honors but shirk the task in which is found the eternal salvation of the soul. This is why this bishop should stay in the position that he holds and not seek a higher one, until it pleases God to give him another."

A complete explanation to the bishop from the Virgin about how he should exercise his episcopal office in order to give glory to God, and about the double reward for having held the rank of bishop in a true way and about the double disgrace for having held it in a false way, and about how Jesus Christ and all the saints welcome a true and up right bishop.

Chapter 3

The Mother of God was speaking: "I wish to explain to the bishop what he should do for God and what will give glory to God. Every bishop must hold his miter carefully in his arms. He must not sell it for money nor give it up to others for the sake of worldly friendship nor lose it through

negligence and lukewarmness. The bishop's miter signifies nothing other than the bishop's rank and power to ordain priests, to prepare the chrism, to correct those who go astray, and to encourage the negligent by his example. To hold his miter carefully in his arms means that he should reflect carefully on how and why he received his episcopal power, how he wields it, and what its effects and purpose are.

If the bishop would examine how he received his power, he should first examine whether he desired the episcopate for his own sake or for God's. If it was for his own sake, then his desire was no doubt carnal; if it was for God's sake, that is, in order to give glory to God, then his desire was meritorious and spiritual.

If the bishop would consider for what purpose he has received the episcopate, then surely it was in order that he might become a father to the poor and a consoler and intercessor for souls, because the bishop's goods are intended for the good of souls. If his means are consumed inefficaciously and wasted in a prodigal manner, then those souls will cry out for revenge on the unjust steward. I will tell you the reward that will come from having held the rank of bishop. It will be a double reward, as Paul says, both corporal and spiritual.

It will be corporal, because he is God's vicar on earth and is therefore accorded divine honor by men as away of honoring God. In heaven it will be corporal and spiritual because of the glorification of body and soul, because the servant will be there with his Lord, due both to the way he lived as a bishop on earth and to his humble example by which he incited others to the glory of heaven along with himself. Everyone who has the rank and garb of a bishop but flees the episcopal way of life will merit a double disgrace.

That the bishop's power is not to be sold means that the bishop should not knowingly commit simony or exercise his office for the sake of money or human favor or promote men whom he knows to be of bad character because people petition him to do so. That the miter should not be given up to others on account of human friendship means that the bishop should not disguise the sins of the negligent or let those whom he can and should

correct go unpunished, or pass over the sins of his friends in silence due to worldly friendship or take the sins of his subordinates on his own back, for the bishop is God's sentinel.

That the bishop should not lose his miter through negligence means that the bishop should not delegate to others what he should and can do more profitably himself, that he should not, for the sake of his own physical ease, transfer to others what he himself is more perfectly able to carry out, since the bishop's duty is not to rest but to work. Nor should the bishop be ignorant of the life and conduct of those to whom he delegates his tasks. Instead he should know and review how they observe justice and whether they conduct themselves prudently and without cupidity in their assignments. I want you to know, too, that the bishop, in his role as shepherd, ought to carry a bouquet of flowers under his arms in order to entice sheep both far and near to run gladly after its scent.

This bouquet of flowers signifies the bishop's pious preaching. The two arms from which the bouquet of divine preaching hangs are two kinds of works necessary to a bishop, namely, public good works and hidden good works. Thus, the nearby sheep in his diocese, seeing the bishop's charity in his works and hearing it in his words, will give glory to God through the bishop. Likewise, the faraway sheep, hearing of the bishop's reputation, will want to follow him. This is the sweetest bouquet: not to be ashamed of God's truth and humility, to preach good doctrine and to practice as one preaches, to be humble when praised and devout in humiliation. When the bishop has traveled to the end of this path and reaches the gate, he must have a gift in his hands to present to the high king. Accordingly, may he have in his hands a vessel precious to him, an empty one, to offer to the high king.

The empty vessel to be offered is his own heart. He must struggle night and day in order for it to be empty of all lusts and the desire for fleeting praise. When such a bishop is led into the kingdom of glory, Jesus Christ, true God and man, will come out to meet him together with the whole host of saints. Then he will hear the angels saying: 'Our God, our joy and every good! This bishop was pure in body, manly in his conduct. It

is befitting that we should present him to you, for he longed for our company everyday. Satisfy his longing and magnify our joy at his coming!' Then, too, other saints will say: 'O God, our joy is both from you and in you and we need nothing else.

Yet, our joy is heightened by the joy of the soul of this bishop who longed for you while he was still able to long. The sweet flowers of his lips increased our numbers. The flowers of his works consoled those dwelling far and near. Therefore, let him rejoice with us, and rejoice yourself over him for whom you longed so much when you died for him.' Finally the King of glory shall say to him: 'Friend, you have come to present to me the vessel of your heart emptied of your selfish will. Therefore, I will fill you with my delight and glory. My happiness will be yours and your glory in me will never cease.' "

The Mother's words to her daughter about the covetousness of bad bishops; she explains in a long parable that many persons through their good intentions attain the spiritual rank that intemperate bishops reject despite having been called to it in a physical sense.

Chapter 4

The Mother of God speaks to the Son's bride saying: "You are crying because God loves people so much but people love God so little. So it is. Where, indeed, is that ruler or bishop who does not covet his office in order to obtain worldly honors and wealth but, rather, desires it in order to help the poor with his own hands? Since rulers and bishops do not want to come to the wedding feast prepared for everyone in heaven, the poor and weak will come instead, as I will show you by way of an example.

In a certain city lived a wise, handsome, and wealthy bishop who was praised for his wisdom and handsome looks, but did not, as he ought to, return thanks to God who had given him that very wisdom. He was praised and honored for his wealth, too, and he handed out numerous gifts with a view to worldly favor. He longed for even greater possessions so as to be

able to give more gifts and win greater honor. This bishop had a learned priest in his diocese who thought to himself as follows: 'This bishop,' he said, 'loves God less than he should. His whole life tends toward worldliness.

Therefore, if it is pleasing to God, I would like to have his episcopate in order to give glory to God. I do not desire it for worldly reasons, seeing that worldly honor is but empty air, nor for the sake of wealth, which is as heavy as the heaviest of burdens, nor for the sake of physical rest and comfort, since I only need a reasonable amount of rest so as to keep my body fit for God's service. No, I desire it for the sake of God alone. And, although I am unworthy of any honor, still, in order to win more souls for God and to benefit more people by my word and example and to support more people through church revenues, I would gladly take on the burdensome task of being bishop.

God knows that I would rather die a painful death or put up with bitter hardships than to have the rank of bishop. I am as susceptible to suffering as the next man, but, still, he who aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. For this reason, I readily desire the honorable title of bishop along with a bishop's burden, although I do so in the same way as I desire death. I desire the honor as a means to saving more souls. I desire the burden for my own salvation and in order to show my love for God and souls. I desire the office for the sole purpose of being able to distribute the goods of the church to the poor more generously, to instruct souls more outspokenly, to instruct those in error more boldly, to mortify my flesh more completely, to exercise self-control more assiduously as an example to others.'

This canon prudently reproved his bishop in private. However, the bishop took it badly and embarrassed the priest in public, imprudently boasting of his own competence and moderation in everything. The canon, however, saddened over the bishop's improprieties, bore the insults with patience. But the bishop ridiculed the charity and patience of the canon and spoke against him so much that the canon was given the blame and

thought to be a lying fool, while the bishop was seen as being just and circumspect.

At length, as time went by, both the bishop and the canon passed away and were called to God's judgment. In his sight and in the presence of the angels, a golden throne appeared with the miter and insignia of a bishop next to it. A large number of demons were following the canon, desirous of finding some fatal fault in him. As to the bishop, they felt as sure about having him as a whale does of the calves that she keeps alive in her belly amid the waves. There were many indictments leveled against the bishop; why and with what intention he undertook the office of bishop, why he grew proud about the goods intended for souls, the way he directed the souls entrusted to him, in what way he had responded to the grace God had given him.

When the bishop could make no just reply to the charges, the judge replied: 'Put excrement on the bishop's head instead of a miter and pitch on his hands instead of gloves, mud on his feet instead of sandals. Instead of a bishop's shirt and linen garment put the rags of a whore on him. Let him have disgrace instead of honor. Instead of a train of servants, let him have a raging mob of demons.' Then the judge added: 'Put a crown as radiant as the sun on the canon's head, gilded gloves on his hands, place shoes on his feet. Let him don the clothes of a bishop with every honor.'

Dressed in his episcopal garb, surrounded by the heavenly host, he was presented to the judge as an honored bishop. The bishop, however, went off like a thief with a rope about his neck. At the sight of him the judge averted his merciful eyes as did all his saints with him.

That is the way in which many persons through their good intentions and in a spiritual sense attain the rank of honor scorned by those who were called to it in a physical sense. All these things took place instantaneously before God, although, for your sake, they were acted out in words, for a thousand years are as a single hour before God. It happens every day that, inasmuch as bishops and rulers do not want to have the office to which they were called, God chooses for himself poor priests and parish clerks who, living according to their own better conscience, would be glad to be

of benefit to souls for the glory of God if they could, and they do what they can. For this reason, they will take the places prepared for the bishops.

God is like a man who hangs a golden crown outside the door of his house and cries out to passersby: 'Anyone of any social standing can earn this crown! He who is most nobly clothed in virtue will obtain it.' Know that if bishops and rulers are wise in worldly wisdom, God is wiser than they in a spiritual sense, for he raises up the humble and does not give his approval to the proud. Know, too, that this canon who was praised did not have to groom his horse when he went off to preach or carry out his duties, nor did he have to light the fire when he was about to eat.

No, he had the servants and the means he needed to live in a reasonable fashion. He had money, too, although not for his own greedy use, for not even if he had had all the wealth in the world would he have given a single shilling to become bishop. But not for all the world would he have refused to become bishop, if that was God's will. He gave his will to God, ready to be honored for the honor of God and ready to be cast down out of love and fear of God.”

Ambrose's words to the bride about the prayer of good persons for the people; rulers of the world and the church are compared to helmsmen, while pride and the rest of the vices are compared to storms, and the passage into truth is compared to a haven; also, about the bride's spiritual calling.

Chapter 5

“It is written that the friends of God once cried out asking God to rend the heavens and come down to free his people of Israel. In these days, too, God's friends cry out saying: 'Kindest God, we see innumerable people perishing in perilous storms, for their helmsmen are greedy and are always desirous of putting to land in those countries where they think they will get a greater profit. They lead the people toward places where there is a tremendous hurling of the waves, while the people themselves do not

know any safe haven. So this countless people is therefore in awful peril and very few of them ever reach their proper haven. We beg you, King of all glory, graciously light up the haven so that your people may escape their danger, not having to obey the wicked helmsmen but being led to the haven by your blessed light.'

By these helmsmen I mean all those who wield either material or spiritual power in the world. Many of them love their own will so much that they do not bother themselves about the needs of the souls under them or about the fierce storms of the world, since they are of their own free will caught up in the storms of pride, greed, and impurity. The wretched populace imitates their deeds, thinking that they are on a straight course. In this way the rulers bring themselves and their subjects to perdition by following their every selfish desire. By the haven I mean the passageway to truth.

For many people this passageway has grown so dark that when someone describes for them how to get to the haven of their celestial fatherland by way of the sacred gospel of Christ, then they call him a liar and instead follow the ways of those who wallow in each and every sin, rather than trusting in the words of those who preach the gospel truth.

By the light requested by the friends of God I mean a divine revelation made in the world in order that God's love might be renewed in human hearts and his justice not be forgotten or neglected. Therefore, because of his mercy and the prayers of his friends, it has pleased God to call you in the Holy Spirit in order that you may spiritually see, hear, and understand so that you may reveal to others that which you hear in the Spirit according to the will of God."

Ambrose's words to the bride offering an allegory about a man, his wife and his housemaid, and about how this adulterer symbolizes a wicked bishop while his wife symbolizes the church and his housemaid the love of this world, and about the harsh sentence on those more attached to the world than to the church.

Chapter 6

“I am Bishop Ambrose. I am appearing to you and speaking with you in allegory because your heart is unable to receive a spiritual message without some physical comparison. Once there was a man whose lawfully wedded wife was charming and prudent. However, he liked the housemaid better than his wife. This had three consequences. The first is that the words and gestures of the housemaid delighted him more than those of his wife. The second is that he dressed the housemaid up in fine clothes without caring that his wife was dressed in common rags. The third is that he was accustomed to spending nine hours with the housemaid and only the tenth hour with his wife. He spent the first hour at the housemaid's side, enjoying himself in gazing on her beauty. He spent the second hour sleeping in her arms. He spent the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of the housemaid's comfort.

He spent the fourth hour taking physical rest with her after his physical toil. He spent the fifth hour restless in his mind and worrying about how to provide for her. He spent the sixth hour at rest with her, seeing now that she fully approved of what he had done for her. At the seventh hour the fire of carnal lust entered into him. He spent the eighth hour satisfying his willful lust with her. In the ninth hour he neglected certain tasks that he nevertheless would have liked to carry out. He spent the tenth hour doing some tasks that he did not feel like doing. And only during this hour did he stay with his wife. One of his wife's relatives came to the adulterer and reproached him strongly, saying: 'Turn the affection of your mind toward your lawfully wedded wife. Love her and clothe her as is fitting, and spend nine hours with her and only the tenth hour with the housemaid. If not, beware, because you will die a horrible and sudden death.'

By this adulterer I refer to someone who holds the office of bishop for the sake of providing for the church but, in spite of that, leads an adulterous life. He is joined to the holy church in spiritual union so that she should be his dearest bride, but he withdraws his affections from her and loves the servile world much more than his noble lady and bride. Thus, he does three things. First, he rejoices more in the fraudulent adulation of

the world than in an obedient disposition toward the holy church. Second, he loves worldly decorations, but cares little about the lack of material or spiritual decoration of the church. Third, he spends nine hours on the world and only one of ten on the holy church. Accordingly, he spends the first hour in good cheer, gazing on the beauty of the world with delight.

He spends the second hour sleeping sweetly in the arms of the world, that is, amid its high fortifications and the vigilance of its armies, happily confident in possessing physical security because of these things. He spends the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of worldly advantage in order that he might obtain the physical enjoyment of the world. He spends the fourth hour gladly taking physical rest after his physical toil, now that he has sufficient means. He spends the fifth hour restless in his mind in different ways, worrying about how he can appear to be wise in worldly matters.

During the sixth hour he experiences an agreeable restfulness of mind, seeing that worldly people everywhere approve of what he has done. In the seventh hour he hears and sees worldly pleasures and readily opens his lust for them. This causes a fire to burn impatiently and intolerably in his heart. In the eighth hour he carries out in act what before had merely been his burning desire. During the ninth hour he negligently omits certain tasks he had wanted to do for worldly motives, so as not to offend those for whom he has a mere natural affection. In the tenth hour he cheerlessly performs a few good deeds, afraid that he might be held in scorn and gain a bad reputation or receive a harsh sentence if for some reason he wholly neglected to do them.

He is accustomed to spending only this tenth hour with the holy church, doing what good he does not out of love but out of fear. He is, of course, afraid of the punishment of the fires of hell. If he could live forever in physical comfort and with plenty of worldly possessions, he would not care about losing the happiness of heaven.

Therefore, I swear by that God who has no beginning and who lives without end, and affirm with certainty that, unless he returns to the holy

church soon and spends nine hours with her and only the tenth with the housemaid, that is, with the world - not by loving it but by possessing the wealth and honor of his episcopal office with reluctance, and arranging everything in humility and reasonably for the glory of God - then the spiritual wound in his soul will be as grave as - to make a physical comparison - the wound of a man struck so horribly on his head that his whole body is destroyed down to the soles of his feet, with his veins and muscles bursting, and his bones getting shattered and the marrow flowing out terribly in all directions.

As harshly tormented as seems the heart in a body struck so violently in its head and the parts of the body closest to the head that the very soles of its feet are in pain, although they are at the farthest remove, equally harshly tortured will that miserable soul closest to the blast of divine justice appear when in its conscience it sees itself being unbearably wounded on every side.”

The Virgin's words to the bride comparing a world-loving bishop to a bellows full of air or to a snail lying in filth, and about the sentence dealt out to such a bishop who is the very opposite of Bishop Ambrose.

Chapter 7

“Scripture says: 'He who loves his own soul in this world will lose it.' Now this bishop loved his own soul with his every desire, and there were no spiritual inclinations in his heart. He might well be compared to an air-filled bellows next to a forge. Just as there is air left in the bellows once the coals are spent and the red-hot metal is flowing, so too, although this man has given his nature everything it craves, uselessly wasting his time, the same inclinations are still left in him like the air in the bellows. His will is inclined to worldly pride and lust. Because of these vices, he offers an excuse and a sinful example to people with hardened hearts who, wasted in sins, are flushed down to hell.

This was not the attitude of the good bishop Ambrose. His heart was filled with God's will. He ate and slept with temperance. He expelled the desire for sin and spent his time usefully and morally. He might well be called a bellows of virtue. He healed the wounds of sin with words of truth. He inflamed those who had grown cold in God's love by the example of his own good works. He cooled those who were burning with sinful desire by the purity of his life. In this way, he helped many people to avoid entering the death of hell, for divine love remained in him as long as he lived.

This bishop, on the other hand, is like a snail that reclines in its native filth and drags its head on the ground. In similar fashion, this man reclines and has his delight in sinful abomination, letting his mind be drawn to worldliness rather than to the thought of eternity. I would have him reflect on three things: First, the way in which he has exercised his priestly ministry. Second, the meaning of that gospel phrase: 'They have sheep's clothing but are ravenous wolves on the inside.' Third, the reason why his heart burns for temporal things but is cold toward the Creator of all things."

The Virgin's words to the bride about her own perfection and excellence, and about the inordinate desires of modern teachers and about their false reply to the question asked them by the glorious Virgin.

Chapter 8

The Mother speaks: "I am the woman who has always been in God's love. I was from my infancy entirely in the company of the Holy Spirit. If you want an example, think of how a nut grows. Its outer shell grows and widens, while its inner kernel also widens and grows, so that the nut is always full and there is no room in it for anything extraneous. In the same manner, too, I was full of the Holy Spirit from my infancy. As my body grew and I became older, the Holy Spirit filled me up with such abundance that he left no room in me for any sin to enter. Thus, I am she who never

committed either venial or mortal sin. I so burned with love for God that I liked nothing but to carry out God's will, for the fire of divine love blazed in my heart.

God, blessed above all forever, who created me through his power and filled me with the power of his Holy Spirit, had an ardent love for me. In the fervor of his love he sent me his messenger and gave me to understand his decision that I should become the Mother of God. When I understood what the will of God was, then, through the fire of love that I bore in my heart towards God, a word of true obedience at once left my lips, and I gave this answer to the messenger, saying: 'May it be done to me according to your word.' At that very instant the Word was made flesh in me. The Son of God became my son.

The two of us had one son who is both God and man, as I am both Mother and Virgin. As my Son Jesus Christ, true God and wisest of men, lay in my womb, I received such great wisdom through him that I not only could understand the learning of scholars, I could even discern whether their hearts were true, whether their words proceeded from love for God or from mere scholarly cleverness. Therefore, you who hear my words should tell that scholar that I have three questions for him: First, whether he desires to win the favor and friendship of the bishop in a corporal sense more than he desires to present the bishop's soul to God in a spiritual sense. Second, whether his mind rejoices more in owning a great many florins or in owning none. Third, which of the following two choices he prefers: to be called a scholar and take his seat among the honored ranks for the sake of worldly glory or to be called a simple brother and take his seat among the lowly.

Let him ponder these three questions carefully. If his love for the bishop is corporal rather than spiritual, then it follows that he tells him things the bishop likes to hear rather than prohibiting him from doing all the sinful things he likes to do.

If he is happier about owning a lot of florins rather than none, then he loves riches more than poverty. He then gives the impression of advising his friends to acquire as much as they can rather than to give up gladly

what they can do without. If, for the sake of worldly honor, he prefers his scholarly reputation and sitting in a seat of honor, then he loves pride more than humility and, therefore, appears to God more like an ass than a scholar. In that case he is chewing on empty straw, which is the same as scholarly knowledge without charity, and he does not have the fine wheat of charity, since divine charity can never grow strong in a proud heart.”

After the scholar had excused himself with the excuse that he had a greater desire to present the soul of the bishop to God in a spiritual sense and that he would rather have no florins and, in the third place, that he did not care about the title of scholar, the Mother said again: ”I am she who heard the truth from the lips of Gabriel and believed without doubting. This is why Truth took for himself flesh and blood from my body and remained in me.

I gave birth to that same Truth who was in himself both God and man. Inasmuch as Truth, who is the Son of God, willed to come to me and to dwell in me and to be born from me, I know fully well whether people have truth on their lips or not. I asked the scholar three questions. I would have approved of his answer, had there been truth in his words. However, there was no truth in them. Therefore, I will give him three warnings. The first is that there are some things that he loves and desires in this world but which he will not obtain at all. The second is that he will soon lose the thing that he has worldly joy in possessing. The third is that the little ones will enter heaven. The great ones will be left standing outside, because the gate is narrow.”

The Virgin's words to the bride about how those who can see and hear and so forth escape dangers by virtue of the sunlight and so forth, but dangers befall those who are blind and deaf and so forth.

Chapter 9

The Mother speaks: "Although a blind man does not see it, the sun still shines clearly in splendor and beauty even while he is falling down the precipice. Travelers who have clear eyesight are thankful for the clear light that helps them avoid the dangers of their journey. Although the deaf man does not hear it, still the violent avalanche comes crashing down upon him terribly from on high, but he who can hear it coming escapes to safer places. Although a dead man cannot taste it while he lies rotting among worms, a good drink still tastes sweet. A living man can sip it and be glad at heart, feeling himself emboldened for any brave deed."

The Virgin speaks to her daughter, offering assurance about the words spoken to her; and about the danger and approaching collapse of the church, and about how, unfortunately, the overseers of the church largely devote themselves nowadays to a life of debauchery and greed and waste the goods of the church in their pride, and about how the wrath of God is aroused against such as these.

Chapter 10

The Mother speaks: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to see, thinking they come from the evil spirit. Just as light and heat accompany the approach of the sun but do not follow after a dark shadow, in the same way two things accompany the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart: ardent love for God and the complete illumination of holy faith. You are experiencing both these things now. These two do not follow upon the devil whom we can liken to a dark shadow. Therefore, send my messenger to the man I mentioned to you. Although I know his heart and how he will respond, and the imminent end of his life, you should still send him the following message.

I would have him know that the foundation of the holy church is so heavily deteriorated on its right side that its vaulted roof has many cracks at the top, and that this causes the stones to fall so dangerously that many of those who pass beneath it lose their lives. Several of the columns that should stand erect are almost level with the ground and even the floor is so full of holes that blind people entering there have dangerous falls.

Sometimes it even happens that, along with the blind, people with good eyesight have bad falls because of the dangerous holes in the floor. As a result of all this, the Church of God is dangerously tottering, and if she is tottering so badly, what awaits next if not her collapse?

I assure you that if she is not helped by repairs, her collapse will be so great that it will be heard throughout all of Christendom.

I am the Virgin whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter, without the least contagious trace of carnal lust. The Son of God was born from my closed womb, giving me solace but no pain at all. I stood next to the cross when he victoriously overcame hell through his patient suffering and opened up heaven with the blood of his heart. I was also on the mountain when God's Son, who is also my Son, ascended into heaven. I have the clearest knowledge of the whole of the catholic faith that he preached and taught to everyone who wanted to enter heaven.

I am that same woman, and now I stand over the world in continuous prayer, like a rainbow above the clouds that appears to bend toward the earth and to touch it with both ends. I see myself as a rainbow bending down toward both the good and the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of my prayers. I bend down toward good people in order that they may be steadfast in the commandments of the holy church, and I bend down toward bad people in order that they may not add to their wickedness and grow worse. I would have the man I mentioned to you know that foul and horrible clouds are rising up in one direction against the shining rainbow. By these clouds I mean those who lead a life of carnal debauchery, those who are as insatiable as the ocean chasm in their greed for money, and those who arrogantly and irrationally spend their means as wastefully as a torrential stream pours out its water.

Many of the overseers of the church are guilty of these three things, and their horrendous sins rise up to heaven in the sight of God, as opposed to my prayers as foul clouds are opposed to the shining rainbow. The men who should be placating the wrath of God along with me are instead provoking God's wrath against themselves. Such men should not be promoted in the church of God. I, the Queen of Heaven, will come to the

aid of anyone who, knowing his own insufficiency, is willing to take on the task of making the church's foundation stable and restoring the blessed vineyard that God founded with his blood, and, together with the angels, I will root up loose roots and throw any trees without fruit into the fire and plant fruitful shoots in their stead. By this vineyard I mean the church of God in which the two virtues of humility and divine charity must be restored.”

ADDENDUM

The Son of God speaks of the papal nuncios: ”You have entered the company of rulers and are going to rise still higher. Worthy is he who works to exalt humility, for pride has already risen far too high. He who has charity for souls will also receive the highest honors, for ambition and simony are now prevalent among many people. Happy is he who tries to root out the vices of the world as far as he can, for vice is now grown abnormally strong.

It is also most efficacious to have patience and to pray for it, for, in the days of many who are yet living, the sun will be rent in two, the stars thrown into confusion, wisdom will be made foolish, the humble on earth will groan and the bold will prevail. The understanding and interpretation of these things belongs to the wise men who know how to make the rough smooth and to provide for the future.” The foregoing revelation was for the cardinal of Albano who was then a prior.

The bride's trusting words to Christ, and about how John the Baptist offers assurance to the bride that Christ speaks to her; and about the happiness of the good rich man, and about how an imprudent bishop is compared to a monkey because of his foolishness and wicked life.

Chapter 11

The bride spoke to Christ humbly in her prayer saying: ”O my Lord Jesus Christ, so firmly do I believe in you that even if the serpent lay in

front of my mouth, he should not enter unless you permitted it for my own good.”

John the Baptist answered: ”The one who appears to you is the very Son of God by nature, whom I myself heard the Father bearing witness to when He said: 'This is my Son.' From him proceeds the Holy Spirit who appeared above him in the form of a dove as I was baptizing him. He is the son of the Virgin according to the flesh. I touched his body with my very own hands.

Believe firmly in him and enter into his life. He is the one who has shown the true path by which poor and rich can enter heaven. But you might ask, what should the inner disposition of a rich person be if he is to enter heaven, given that God himself has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven? To this I answer you: A rich man who is disposed in such away that he is afraid to have any ill-gotten goods, who is concerned not to spend his means wastefully or contrary to God's will, who holds his possessions and honors with reluctance and would willingly be separated from them, who is disturbed by the loss of souls and the dishonor done to God, and, although he is compelled by the plans of God to own the world to some extent, is vigilant concerning the love of God in his every intention, this is the kind of rich man who bears fruit and is happy and dear to God.

This bishop, however, is not rich in that way. He is like a monkey with four distinguishing features. The first is a costume that has been made for him that hangs down and hides his torso but leaves his private parts completely exposed. The second is that he touches stinking things with his fingers and puts them to his mouth. The third is that he has a humanlike face, although the rest of his coloring and appearance is that of a brute animal. The fourth is that, although he has both hands and feet, he tramples on the dirt with his hands and fingers. This foolish bishop is like a monkey, curious about the vanity of the world, too deformed for any action deserving praise.

He wears a costume, that is, his episcopal ordination, which is honorable and precious in the sight of God, but his naked private parts are

exposed, since the frivolity of his character and his carnal lust are displayed to others and bring ruin to souls. This goes against what that noble knight says about how a man's more shameful parts are given the greater honor, meaning by this that the animal urges of priests should be hidden by good works, so that the weak may not be scandalized by their example.

A monkey also touches and sniffs at stinking things. What do you do with a finger if not point to something you have seen, just as when I beheld God in his human nature and pointed to him with my finger, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God'? What are the fingers of a bishop if not his praiseworthy virtues through which he should point to God's justice and charity?

But, instead, this man's actions point to the fact that he is nobleborn and rich, worldly wise and lavish with his money. What is this if not to touch stinking rot with his fingers? Is glorying in the flesh or in a great household anything else than glorying in puffed-up sacks? A monkey has a human face but looks like a brute animal in other respects.

This man, too, possesses a soul stamped with the seal of God but deformed through his own greed. In the fourth place, just as a monkey touches and tramples on the dirt with his feet and hands, so too this man covets the things of the earth in his appetites and actions, turning his face away from heaven and lowering it to the earth like an oblivious animal. Does a man like that lessen the wrath of God? No, indeed, he rather provokes God's justice against himself."

ADDENDUM

The following revelation was made about a cardinal legate during the jubilee year. The Son of God speaks: "O proud debater, where is your pomp, where is your equestrian finery now? You did not want to understand while you were being held in honor. This is why you have now fallen into dishonor. Answer my question then, although I know all things, while this new bride is listening." And immediately it was as if an amazingly misshapen person appeared, trembling and naked. The judge

said to him: "O soul, you taught that the world and its riches should be spurned. Why then did you follow after them?"

The soul answered: "Because their filthy stench smelled better to me than your sweet fragrance." And as soon as he said this, a daemon poured a vessel of sulphur and poison into the soul. Again the judge spoke: "O soul, you were set up to be a shining lamp for the people, why did you not shine forth by word and example?" The soul answered: "Because your love had been wiped out from my heart. I roamed about like one who had lost his memory and like a vagabond, looking at things in the present and not thinking of the future." When the soul had said this, it was deprived of the light of its eyes. The daemon who was seen to be present said: "O judge, this soul is mine. What shall I do?" The judge said: "Purge and scrutinize it as in a winepress until the council is held at which the allegations of both friends and enemies will be discussed."

The bride speaks to Christ, pouring forth prayers for the bishop mentioned above, and about the answers that Christ, the Virgin, and Saint Agnes gave to the bride.

Chapter 12

"O my Lord, I know that no one can enter heaven unless drawn by the Father. Therefore, most kind Father, draw this ailing bishop to you. And you, Son of God, help him if he makes the effort. And you, Holy Spirit, fill this cold and empty bishop with your love."

God the Father answers: "If he who draws something is strong but the thing drawn too heavy, his effort is soon wasted and comes to naught. Besides, if the one drawn is bound up, then he can neither help himself nor the person drawing him. If the one drawn is unclean, then he is loathsome to the one who draws him and comes in contact with him. The attitude of this bishop is like that of a man standing at a fork in the road trying to decide which way to take."

The bride answered: "O my Lord, is it not written that no one stands still in this life but advances either toward that which is better or toward that which is worse?"

The Father answered: "Both things could be said here, since this man stands, as it were, between two roads, one of joy and one of sorrow. The horror of eternal punishment upsets him, and he would prefer to obtain the joy of heaven. However, he thinks the road that leads to joy is too rough to tread. But he certainly does start walking when he goes after objects he fervently desires."

Blessed Agnes speaks: "The attitude of this bishop is like that of a man standing between two roads. He knew one of them was narrow at first but delightful in the end; he knew the other was pleasant for a while but ended in a bottomless pit of anguish. As the traveler thought about these two roads, he was more attracted to the road that was pleasant at the start. However, since he was afraid of the bottomless pit, the following thought occurred to him. He said: 'There must be a shortcut on the pleasurable road. If I can find it, I can go safely on for a long time and, when I get to the pit at the end, provided I find the shortcut, nothing will harm me.' So he walked safely on along the road, but when he came to the pit, he took a terrible fall right into it, since he had not found the shortcut he was expecting.

Nowadays there are a lot of people with the same idea as this man. They think to themselves as follows. They say: 'It is burdensome to take the narrow path. It is hard to give up our self-will and our privileges.' In this way they place a false and dangerous confidence in themselves. They say: 'The road is long. God's mercy is great. The world is pleasant and was made for pleasure. There is nothing to prevent me from making use of the world for a time as I wish, since I mean to follow God at the end of my life. After all, there is a kind of shortcut from the path of worldliness and that is contrition and confession. If I can manage that, I will be saved.'

The thought that a person can keep desiring sin until the end of life and then go to confession is a very weak hope, because they fall into the pit sooner than they expect. At times, too, they undergo such pain and so

sudden a death that they are completely incapable of repenting in a fruitful manner. It serves them right. For, when they had the opportunity, they did not want to have any foresight for coming evils, but they arbitrarily set the time for God's mercy by their definition. They made no resolution not to sin so long as they could continue enjoying sin. In the same way, too, this bishop was standing between these two roads. Now, however, he is drawing nearer to the more pleasurable path of the flesh. Let us say that he has three pages set before him to read.

He reads the first page over and over with pleasure, but he reads the second page only once in a while and with no pleasure at all, while he reads the third only rarely and does so with sadness. The first page represents the wealth and privileges he delights in. The second is the fear of Gehenna and the future judgment that is upsetting to him. The third is the love and filial fear of God that he rarely peruses. If he would take to heart all that God has done for him or how much he has lavished on him, the love of God would never be extinguished in his heart.”

The bride answered: ”O Lady, pray for him.” And then Blessed Agnes said: ”What is the role of justice if not to judge and what is the role of mercy if not to encourage?” The Mother of God speaks: ”The bishop will be told this: Although God can do all things, a man's personal cooperation is still necessary if he is to avoid sin and gain the love of God. There are three means to avoid sin and three means to obtain love. The three by which sin is avoided are: Perfect penance; second, the intention of not wanting to commit the sin again; third, to improve one's life according to the advice of those whom one knows to have given up the world. The three means that work together to obtain love are humility, mercy, and the effort to love. Whoever prays even one Our Father for the sake of gaining God's love will soon experience the effect of God's love drawing close to him.

About the other bishop, about whom I was speaking with you before, I must say in conclusion that the pits appear too wide for him to leap over, the walls too high to climb, the bars too strong to break. I stand here waiting for him, but he turns his head away toward the activities of three groups of people that he enjoys watching. The first group is a dancing

chorus. He tells them: 'I like listening to you, wait up for me!' The second group is engaged in speculation. He tells them: 'I want to see what you see - I enjoy that sort of thing a lot.' The third group is enjoying itself and relaxing in quiet, and he wants to enjoy privilege and quiet with them.

To be a dancing chorus in the world means nothing other than to pass from one fleeting delight to another, from one desire for honor to another. To stand and speculate means nothing other than to take the soul away from divine contemplation and to think about the collecting and distributing of temporal goods. To relax in quiet means nothing other than to relax in body. While watching these three crowds, the bishop has climbed up a high mountain but he does not care about the words I have sent to him, nor does he care about the terms of my message that are that, if he keeps his promise, I will also keep mine."

The bride answers: "O gentle Mother, do not abandon him!" The Mother says to her: "I will not abandon him until dust returns to dust. More than that, if he breaks through the bars, I will come to meet him like a handmaid and will help him like a mother." And the Mother added: "Are you, daughter, thinking of what would have been the reward of that canon of Orléans, if his bishop had been converted? I will answer you: You see how the earth bears grass and flowers of different species and kinds. In the same way, too, if every person had uprightly remained in their own station from the beginning of the world, then everyone would have received a great reward, inasmuch as everyone who is in God would have gone from one delight to the next, not because of any sense of tediousness in their pleasure, but because their delight grows continuously more delightful and their indescribable joy is continuously made new."

EXPLANATION

This was the bishop of Växjö. When he was in Rome, he was greatly worried about his return. It was heard in the spirit: "Tell the bishop that his delay is more useful than his haste. Those in his company who have gone ahead of him will follow after him. This is why when he returns to his country, he will find my words to be true." This is the way it all turned out.

On his return, he found the king in capture and the whole kingdom in an uproar. Those in his company who had gone ahead of him were impeded for a long time on the way and arrived after him. "Know also that the lady who is in the company of the bishop will return safely but will not die in her home country." And so it turned out, for she went a second time to Rome, and she died and was buried there.

ABOUT THE SAME BISHOP

When Lady Bridget came down from Monte Gargano to the city of Mafredonia in the kingdom of Sicily, the same bishop was in her company. On the mountain it happened that he had such a bad fall from his horse that he broke two ribs. When the lady was about to go out to St. Nicholas of Bari in the morning, he called her to him saying: "Lady, it is so hard for me to stay here without you. It is also a burden that you should be delayed on my account, especially given the raids going on. I ask you," he said, "for the love of Jesus Christ, to pray to God for me and touch your hand to my aching side!

I hope that my pain will be lessened through the touch of your hands." With tears in her eyes, she answered in compassion: "Sir, I regard myself as nothing, for I am a great sinner in God's sight. But let us all pray to God and he will answer your faith." They prayed, and when she stood up, she touched the bishop's side, saying: "May the Lord Jesus Christ heal you." Immediately the pain went away. And the bishop got up and followed her all the way back to Rome.

The Mother's words to the daughter in which the words and deeds of Christ are explained and wonderfully described as a treasure, his divine nature as a castle, sin as bars, virtues as walls, and the beauty of the world and the delight of friendship as two moats, and about how a bishop ought to behave with respect to the care of souls.

Chapter 13

The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: "This bishop prays to me in his love, and, for that reason, he should do what pleases me most. There is a treasure I know of that whoever possesses it will never be poor, whoever sees it will never know distress and death, and whoever desires it will joyfully receive whatever he wishes. The treasure is locked up in a strong castle behind four bars. Outside the castle stand high walls large and thick. Beyond the walls are two wide and deep moats. And so I ask the bishop to jump over the two moats in a single leap, and climb the walls in a single bound, and break through the bars with a single blow and then to bring me the thing that pleases me most.

I will now tell you the meaning of all this. When you use the word 'treasure,' you refer to something that is rarely used or moved about. In this case, the treasure is my dearest Son's precious words and the deeds he did during and before his passion, along with the miracles he worked when the Word was made flesh in my body and that he continues to do when, at God's word, the bread on the altar each day is changed into that same flesh. All these things are a precious treasure that has become so neglected and forgotten that there are very few people who recall it or draw any profit from it. However, the glorious body of God my Son is to be found in a fortified castle, that is, in the strength of his divine nature. Just as a castle is a defense against enemies, so the strength of my Son's divine nature is a defense for the body of his human nature, so that no enemy can harm him. The four bars are four sins that exclude many people from the participation in and the goodness of the strength of the body of Christ.

The first sin is pride along with the desire for worldly honors. The second is the desire for worldly possessions. The third is the repulsive lust to fill the body up intemperately, and its utterly repulsive satisfaction. The fourth is anger and envy and the neglect of one's own salvation. Many people have an excessive love for these four sins and possess them habitually, which takes them very far away from God. They see and receive the body of God, but their soul is as far from God as thieves are when the way to what they want to steal is blocked by strong bars.

This is why I said that he should break through the bars with a single blow. The blow symbolizes the zeal for souls with which a bishop ought to break sinners through deeds of justice done for the love of God in order that, once the bars of vice have been broken, the sinner can reach the precious treasure. Although he cannot strike down every sinner, he should do what he can and ought to do, especially for those who are under his care, sparing neither great nor small, neighbor nor relation, friend nor enemy. This is what Saint Thomas of England did. He suffered much for the sake of justice and met with a harsh death in the end, all because he did not refrain from striking bodies with the justice of the church in order that souls might endure less suffering.

This bishop should imitate Thomas's way of life, so that everyone who hears him may understand that he hates his own sins as well as other people's sins. The blow of divine zeal will then be heard throughout the heavens before God and his angels. Many people will then be converted and mend their ways, saying: 'He does not hate us but our Sins.' They will say: 'Let us repent and we will become friends both of God and of the bishop.'

The three walls surrounding the castle are three virtues. The first virtue is giving up carnal pleasures and doing the will of God. The second is to prefer to suffer reproaches and curses for the sake of truth and justice rather than to obtain worldly honors and possessions by dissimulating the truth. The third is to be ready to forgo both life and possessions for the sake of any Christian's salvation. However, look at what people do nowadays. They think these walls are too high to climb over at all.

Accordingly, neither their hearts nor their souls approach the glorious body with any constancy, for they are far from God. This is why I told my friend to climb the walls in a single bound. A bound is what you call it when the feet are held far apart in order for the body to move quickly. A spiritual bound is similar, for, when the body is on earth and the love of the heart is in heaven, then you climb the three walls quickly. When a man meditates on the things of heaven, he is ready to give up his own will, to

suffer rejection and persecution for the sake of justice, and to die willingly for the glory of God.

The two moats outside the wall represent the beauty of the world and the company and enjoyment of worldly friends. There are many people who are content to take it easy in these moats and never care whether they will see God in heaven. The moats are wide and deep, wide because the wills of such people are far from God, and deep because they confine many souls in the depths of hell. This is why the moats should be jumped over in a single leap. A spiritual leap is nothing other than to detach one's whole heart from things that are empty and to take the leap from earthly goods to the kingdom of heaven.

I have shown how to break through the bars and leap over the walls. Now I will show how this bishop should bring me the most precious thing there ever was. God's divine nature was and is from eternity without beginning, since neither beginning nor end can be found in it. But his human nature was in my body and took flesh and blood from me. Therefore, it is the most precious thing there ever was or is. Accordingly, when the righteous soul receives God's body with love and when his body fills the soul, the most precious thing there ever was is there. Although the divine nature exists in three Persons without beginning and without end in itself, when God sent his Son to me with his divine nature and the Holy Spirit, he received his blessed body from me. I will now show the bishop how this precious thing is to be brought before the Lord. Wherever God's friend comes across a sinner whose words show little love for God but much love for the world, that soul is empty with respect to God.

Accordingly, God's friend should show his love for God by his sorrow that a soul redeemed by the Creator's blood should be an enemy to God. He should show compassion for the wretched soul by using two voices, as it were, toward it: one in which he entreats God to have pity on the soul, and another in which he shows the soul its own danger. If he can reconcile and unite the two of them, God and the soul, then the hands of his love will offer to God the most precious gift, for the thing most dear to me is when

the body of God, which was once inside me, and the human soul, which God has created, come together in friendship.

This is hardly surprising. You know well that I was present when my Son, the great knight, went forth from Jerusalem to fight a battle so brutal and difficult that all the sinews of his arms were strained. His back was bloodied and livid, his feet pierced by nails, his eyes and ears full of blood. His head sank when he gave up his spirit. His heart was sundered by the point of a spear. He won souls by suffering greatly. He who now dwells in glory stretches out his arms to men, but few there are who bring him his bride. Consequently, a friend of God should spare neither life nor possessions in helping others while he helps himself by bringing them to my Son.

Tell this bishop that, given that he prays for my friendship, I will bind myself to him with a bond of faith. The body of God, which was once within me, will welcome his soul with great love. As the Father was in me together with the Son who had my body and soul in himself, and as the Holy Spirit who is in the Father and the Son was everywhere with me and had my Son within him, so too my servant will be bound to the same Spirit. If he loves the sufferings of God and has his precious body in his heart, then he will have God's human nature that has the divine nature within and without it. God will be in him and he in God, just as God is in me and I in him. As my servant and I share one God, we will also share one bond of love and one Holy Spirit who is one God with the Father and the Son.

One thing more: If this bishop keeps his promise with me, I will help him during his lifetime. At the end of his life I will help and assist him and bring his soul before God, saying: 'My God, this man served you and obeyed me, and therefore I present his soul to you!' O daughter, what is a person thinking of when he despises his own soul? Would God the Father in his unfathomable divinity have let his own innocent Son suffer so much in his human nature, if he had not an honest desire and longing for souls and for the eternal glory that he has prepared for them?"

This revelation was about the bishop of Linköping who was afterwards made archbishop. There is more on the same bishop in Book 6, chapter 22, beginning: "This prelate."

ADDENDUM ABOUT THE SAME MAN

"The bishop for whom you weep came to an easy purgatory. Know for certain that, although in the world he had many who blocked his way, they have now received their sentence, and he shall be glorified due to his faith and purity."

The Mother's words to her daughter, using a marvelous comparison to describe a certain bishop, likening the bishop to a butterfly, his humility and pride to its two wings, the three facades covering up the vices of the bishop to the insect's three colors, his deeds to the thickness of its coloring, his double will to the butterfly's two feelers, his greed to its mouth, his puny love to its puny body.

Chapter 14

The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: "You are a vessel that the owner fills and the teacher empties. However, it is one and the same person who fills and empties you. A person who can pour wine and milk and water together into a vessel would be called an expert teacher if he could separate each of these liquids blended together and restore each to its own proper nature. This is what I, the Mother and Teacher of all mankind, have done and am doing to you. A year and a half ago, all sorts of matters were spoken to you, and now they all seem to be blended together in your soul, and it would seem disgusting if they were all poured out together, since their purpose would not be understood. This is why I gradually distinguish them as I see fit.

Do you recall that I sent you to a certain bishop whom I called my servant? Let us compare him to a butterfly with two wide wings spattered in the colors white, red, and blue. When you touch it, the pigment sticks to your fingers like ashes. This insect has a puny body but a big mouth, two

feelers on its forehead, and a hidden place in its belly through which it emits the filth of its belly. The wings of this insect, that is, the bishop's wings, are his humility and pride. Outwardly he appears humble in his words and gestures, humble in his dress and actions, but inwardly there is a pride that makes him great in his own sight, rendering him swollen up with his own reputation, ambitious for people's appreciation, judgmental of others, and arrogant in preferring himself to others. On these two wings he flies before people with the apparent humility that aims at pleasing individuals and being the talk of everyone, as well as with the pride that makes him consider himself to be holier than others.

The three colors of the wings represent his three facades that cover up his vices. The color red means that he continually lectures on the sufferings of Christ and the miracles of the saints in order to be called holy, but they are far from his heart indeed, since he has not much liking for them. The color blue means that, on the outside, he does not seem to care about temporal goods, seeming to be dead to the world and to be all for the things of heaven under his facade of heavenly blue. But this second color makes him no more stable or fruitful before God than the first. The color white implies that he is a religious in his dress and commendable in his ways. However, his third color holds just as much charm and perfection as the first two. As a butterfly's pigment is thick and stays on your fingers, leaving behind nothing but a kind of ashy substance, so too his deeds seem to be admirable, inasmuch as he desires solitude, but they are empty and ineffectual as to their usefulness to him, since he does not sincerely yearn for or love that which is lovable.

The two feelers represent his duplicitous will. You see, he wants to lead a life of comfort in this world and to have eternal life after death. He does not want to be cheated out of being held in great esteem on earth while receiving an even more perfect crown in heaven. This bishop is just like a butterfly, thinking he can carry heaven on one feeler and earth on the other, although he cannot put up with the least little difficulty for God's glory. So he relies on God's church and thinks he can benefit it by his word and example, as if the church could not thrive without him. He presumes that his own good deeds will make worldly people bear spiritual fruit.

Hence he reasons like a soldier who has already fought the fight. 'Since,' he says, 'I am already called devout and humble, why should I strive after a life of greater austerity? Although I may sin in a few pleasures without which my life would be unhappy, still my greater merits and good deeds will be my excuse. If heaven can be won for a cup of cold water, what need is there to struggle beyond measure?'

A butterfly has a big mouth as well, but its greed is even bigger, so much so that if it could eat up every single fly but one, it would want to eat that one up, too. Likewise, if this man could add a shilling to the many he already has in such away that it would go unnoticed in secret, he would take it, although the hunger of his greed would not be stilled even then.

A butterfly also has a hidden outlet for its impurities. This man, too, gives improper vent to his anger and impatience, displaying his secret impurities to others. And as a butterfly has a little body, this man has little charity, while his lack of charity is made up for only by the width and breadth of his wings." The bride answered: "If he has just one spark of charity, there is always some hope of life and charity and salvation for him." The Mother said: "Did not Judas also have some charity left when he said after he had betrayed his Lord: 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood'? He wanted to make it look as though he had charity, but he had none."

The Mother's words to her daughter in which another such bishop is allegorically described as a gadfly, his wordy eloquence as flying, his two concerns as two wings, his flattery of the world as a sting; and about the Virgin's amazement at the life of these two bishops; also, about preachers.

Chapter 15

The Mother speaks again to the bride, saying: "I have shown you another bishop whom I called the pastor of the flock. Let us compare him to a gadfly with an earthy color that flies about noisily. Wherever he alights, his bite is terrible and painful. This pastor has an earthy color, for,

although he was called to poverty, he would rather be rich than poor, he would rather be in charge than submit, he would rather have his own will than be disciplined through obedience to others. He flies about noisily in the sense that he is full of wordy eloquence in his pious preaching, and lectures about worldly vanities instead of spiritual doctrine, praising and following worldly vanities rather than the holy simplicity of his order.

He has two wings as well, that is, two ideas: The first is that he wants to offer people charming and soothing speech so that he may win their esteem. The second is that he wants everyone to yield to him and obey him. The sting of a gadfly is unbearable. Likewise, this man stings souls to damnation. Although he should be a doctor of souls, he does not tell the people who come to him about their danger and infirmity nor does he use a sharp scalpel, but speaks soothingly to them in order to be called meek and so as not to cause anyone to avoid him. These two bishops are quite simply astonishing. One of them makes an appearance of being poor, solitary, and humble in order to be called spiritual. The other one wants to possess the world in order to be called merciful and generous. The one wants to seem to own nothing and yet longs to possess everything secretly. The other openly wants to have many possessions in order to have a lot to give away and thus win the esteem of others. Accordingly, as the proverb goes, since they serve me in a way I cannot see (because I do not accept it), I shall reward them in a way they will not see.

Do you wonder why such men are praised for their preaching? I will tell you: Sometimes a bad man speaks to good people and the good Spirit of God is poured into them, not because of the goodness of the teacher but through the teacher's words in which the good Spirit of God is found for the good of the listeners. Sometimes a good man speaks to bad people who are made good by hearing it both because of the good Spirit of God and the goodness of the teacher. Sometimes a cold man speaks to cold people in such away that these cold hearers recount what they have heard to fervent people who had not been there, rendering their listeners more fervent. So, do not worry about what kind of people you are sent to. Wonderful is God who tramples gold underfoot and places mud amidst the rays of the sun!"

The Son's explanation to the bride that the damnation of souls does not please God; also, about the astonishing questions of the younger bishop to the older bishop, and about the answers of the older bishop to the younger one.

Chapter 16

The Son speaks to the bride, saying: "Why do you think these two men are being shown to you? Is it because God enjoys censuring and condemning them? Of course not. No, it is done in order better to reveal God's patience and glory and also so that those who hear it may fear God's judgment. But now, come and listen to an astonishing conversation. Look there, the younger bishop has asked the older one a question, saying: 'Brother, hear and answer me. Once you had been bound to the yoke of obedience, why did you forsake it? Once you had chosen poverty and the religious state, why did you abandon them? Once you had entered the religious state and made yourself dead to the world, why did you seek the episcopate?' The older man answered: 'The obedience that taught me to be an inferior was a burden to me. That is why I preferred my freedom. The yoke that God says is pleasant was bitter to me.

That is why I sought and chose bodily comfort. My humility was pretended. That is why I craved honors. And, since it is better to push than to pull, I desired the episcopate accordingly.' The younger man asked again: 'Why did you not do honor to your episcopal see by giving it worldly honor? Why did you not acquire riches by means of worldly wisdom? Why did you not spend your possessions according to the demands of worldly honor? Why did you humble yourself outwardly rather than acting in accord with worldly ambition?'

The older man answered: 'The reason I did not strew worldly honors upon my see was that I was hoping myself to be honored so much the more by appearing to be humble and spiritual rather than worldly minded. Therefore, in order to be praised by worldly people, I made a show of

holding everything in contempt; I appeared humble and devout in order to be held in esteem by spiritual men. The reason I did not acquire riches through worldly wisdom was in order that spiritual men might not notice it and hold me in contempt because of my secularity. The reason I was not liberal in giving gifts was that I preferred to have few rather than many companions for the sake of my own peace and quiet. I preferred having my money-chest full to handing away gifts.'

Again the younger man asked: 'Tell me, why did you give a pleasant and sweet drink out of a dirty vessel to an ass? Why did you give the bishop husks from the pigsty? Why did you fling down your crown under your feet? Why did you spit out wheat but chew weeds? Why did you free others from their chains but bind yourself with fetters? Why did you apply medicine to the wounds of others but poison to your own?' The older man answered: 'I gave my ass a sweet drink from a disgusting, dirty vessel in the sense that, although a scholar, I preferred to handle the divine sacraments of the altar for the sake of my worldly reputation rather than to apply myself to everyday cares. Inasmuch as my secrets were unknown to men but known to God, I grew a great deal in presumption and in that way added to the heavy justice of my terrible condemnation.

To the second question, I answer that I gave the bishop husks from the pig-sty in the sense that I followed the promptings of nature through self-indulgence and did not stand firm in self-restraint. As to the third question, I cast my episcopal crown underfoot in the sense that I preferred to do acts of mercy for the sake of human favor rather than acts of justice for the glory and love of God.

As to the fourth question, I spat out wheat but chewed straw in the sense that I did not preach God's words out of love for God nor did I like doing the things I told others to do. As to the fifth question, I freed others but bound myself in the sense that I absolved the people who turned to me with contrition, but I myself liked doing the things that they lamented through their penance and rejected through their tears. As to the sixth question, I anointed others with healing ointment but myself with poison in the sense that while I preached about purity of life and made others better,

I made myself worse. I laid down precepts for others but was myself unwilling to lift a finger to do those very things. Where I saw others making progress, that is where I failed and wasted away, since I preferred to add a load to my already committed sins than to lessen my load of sins by making reparation.'

After this a voice was heard, saying: 'Give thanks to God that you are not among these poisonous vessels that, when they break, return to the poison itself.' Immediately, the death of one of the two was then announced."

The Virgin's words to her daughter praising the life and order of St. Dominic, and about how he turned to the Virgin at the hour of his death, and about how in modern times few of his friars live by the sign of Christ's passion given them by Dominic, but many of them live by the mark of incision given them by the devil.

Chapter 17

Again the Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "Yesterday I told you about two men who belonged to the Rule of St. Dominic. Dominic held my Son as his dear Lord and loved me his Mother more than his own heart. My Son gave this holy man the inspired thought that there are three things in the world that displease my Son: pride, greed, and carnal desire. By his sighs and entreaties, St. Dominic procured help and medicine so as to combat these three evils. God had compassion on his tears and inspired him to set up a codified rule of life in which the holy man opposed three virtues to the three evils of the world.

Against the vice of greed he laid it down that one should own nothing without the permission of one's superior. Against pride he prescribed wearing a humble and simple habit. Against the bottomless voracity of the flesh, he prescribed abstinence and times for practicing self-discipline. He placed a superior over his friars in order to preserve peace and protect unity.

In his desire to give his friars a spiritual sign, he symbolically impressed a red cross on their left arm near the heart, I mean through his teaching and fruitful example, when he taught and admonished them continually to recall the suffering of God, to preach God's word more fervently, not for the world's sake but out of love for God and souls. He also taught them to submit rather than to govern, to hate their self-will, to bear insults patiently, to want nothing beyond food and clothing, to love truth in their hearts and to proclaim it with their lips, not to seek their own praise but to have the words of God on their lips and to teach them always, without omitting them out of shame or uttering them in order to win human favor.

When the time came for his deliverance, which my Son had revealed to him in spirit, he came in tears to me, his Mother, saying: 'O Mary, Queen of Heaven, whom God predestined for himself to unite his divine and human natures, you alone are that virgin and you alone are that most worthy mother. You are the most powerful of women from whom Power itself went forth. Hear me as I pray to you! I know you to be most powerful and therefore I dare to come before you. Take my friars, whom I have reared and nurtured beneath the austerity of my scapular, and protect them beneath your wide mantle! Rule them and nurture them anew, so that the ancient enemy may not prevail against them and may not ruin the new vineyard planted by the right hand of your Son! My Lady, by my scapular with its one piece in front and one at the back, I am referring to nothing other than the twofold concern that I have shown for my friars.

I was anxious night and day for them and about how they might serve God by practicing temperance in a reasonable and praiseworthy fashion. I prayed for them that they might not desire any worldly thing that could offend God or that might blacken their reputation for humility and piety among their fellows. Now that the time for my reward has come, I entrust my members to you. Teach them as children while you carry them as their mother.' With these and other words, Dominic was called to the glory of God.

I answered him as follows, using figurative language: 'O Dominic, my beloved friend, since you love me more than yourself, I shall protect your sons beneath my mantle and rule them, and all those who persevere in your role shall be saved. My mantle is wide with mercy and I deny mercy to no one who happily asks for it. All those who seek it find protection in the bosom of my mercy.'

But, my daughter, what do you think the rule of Dominic consists in? Surely, it consists in humility, continence, and the contempt of the world. All those who make a commitment to these three virtues and lovingly persevere in them will never be condemned. They are the ones who keep the rule of Blessed Dominic. Now hear something truly amazing: Dominic placed his sons beneath my wide mantle, but, look and see, now there are fewer of them beneath my wide mantle than there were in the austerity of his scapular. Yet not even during Dominic's lifetime did everyone have a true sheepskin or a Dominican character. I can illustrate their character better by way of a parable.

If Dominic came down from the heights of heaven where he lives and said to the Thief who was coming back from the valley and had been looking over the sheep with a view to slaughtering and destroying them, he would say 'Why are you calling after and leading away the sheep that I know to be mine by evident signs?' The Thief might answer: 'Why, Dominic, do you appropriate to yourself what is not your own? It is outrageous pilferage to usurp another's property for oneself.' If Dominic tried to reply that he had raised and tamed them and led and taught them, the Thief would say: 'You may have brought them up and taught them, but I have led them back to their own self-will by gentle coaxing.'

You may have mixed leniency with austerity for them, but I enticed them more coaxingly and showed them things better to their liking, and, see, more of them are running to my pasture at my call. This is how I know the sheep eagerly following me are mine, given that they are free to choose to follow the one who attracts them more.' If Dominic should answer in turn that his sheep are marked with a red sign in the heart, the Thief would say; 'My sheep are marked with my sign, a mark of incision on their right

ear. Since my sign is more obvious and visible than your sign, I recognize them as my sheep.'

The Thief stands for the devil who has incorporated many of Dominic's sheep into himself. They have an incision on the right ear in the sense that they do not listen to the words of life of the one saying: 'The path to heaven is narrow.' They only put into practice those words they like hearing. Dominic's sheep are few, and they have a red sign in their heart in the sense that they lovingly keep in mind God's suffering and lead a happy life in all chastity and poverty, fervently preaching the word of God.

For this is the Rule of Dominic as people commonly express it; 'To be able to carry all that you own on your back, to want to own nothing but what the Rule allows, to give up not only superfluous things but even at times to refrain from licit and necessary things on account of the impulses of the flesh.' ”

The Mother's words to her daughter about how friars would now listen and in fact do listen sooner to the devil's voice than to that of their father Dominic, about how few of them follow in his footsteps now, about how those seeking the episcopate for worldly honor and for their own comfort and freedom do not belong to the rule of St. Dominic, about the terrible condemnation of such men, and about the condemnation experienced for one such episcopate.

Chapter 18

The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "I told you that all those who belong to the Rule of Dominic are beneath my mantle. Now you are going to hear just how many they are. If Dominic were to come down from the place of delights where he has true happiness and were to cry out as follows: 'My dear brothers, you my followers, there are four good things in reserve for you: honor in return for humility, everlasting riches in return for poverty, satisfaction without boredom in return for continence, eternal life in return for the contempt of the world,' they would scarcely listen to him. On the contrary, if the devil suddenly came up from his hollow and

proclaimed four different things, and said: 'Dominic promised you four things. Look here, I have what you want in my hand.

I offer honors, I hold wealth in my hand, instant gratification is there, the world will be delicious to enjoy. Take what I offer you, then! Use these things that are certain! Lead a life of joy so that after death you may rejoice together!' If these two voices were now to sound in the world, more people would run to the voice of the robber and devil than to the voice of Dominic, my great good friend. What shall I say of the friars of Dominic?

Those who are in his rule are indeed few, fewer still those who follow in his footsteps by imitating him. For not everyone listens to the one voice, because not everyone is of one and the same sort - not in the sense that not everyone comes from God or that not everyone can be saved, if they want, but in the sense that not everyone listens to the voice of the Son of God saying: 'Come to me and I will refresh you, by giving you myself!'

But what shall I say of those friars who seek the episcopate for worldly reasons? Do they really belong to the rule of Dominic? Certainly not. Or are those who accept the episcopate for a good reason excluded from the Rule of Dominic? Of course not. Blessed Augustine lived by a Rule before he became a bishop, but when he was bishop he did not give up his rule of life, although he attained the highest honors. For he accepted the honor with reluctance, and they did not bring more comfort to him but more work, because, when he saw he could do good to souls, he gladly gave up his own desires and physical comfort for God's sake in order to win more souls for God. Accordingly, those men who aspire to and accept the episcopate in order to be of greater benefit to souls do belong to the Rule of Dominic. Their reward will be twofold, both because of the noble order that they had to leave and of the burden of the episcopal office to which they were called.

I swear by that God by whom the prophets swore, who did not swear their oath in impatience but because they took God as a witness to their words.

Likewise, by the same God I declare and swear that to those friars who have scorned the rule of Dominic there will come a mighty hunter

with ferocious hounds. It is as if a servant were to say to his master: 'There have come into your garden many sheep whose meat is poisoned, whose fleeces are matted with filth, whose milk is useless, and who are very insolent in their lusts. Command them to be slaughtered, so that there will be no shortage of pasture for the profitable sheep and so that the good sheep will not be confused by the insolence of the bad.'

The master would answer him: 'Shut the entrances so that only such sheep as approved by me can get in, such sheep as it is right to foster and nourish, such as are upright and peaceful.' I tell you that some of the entrances will be shut at first, but not all of them. Later the hunter will come with his hounds and he will spare neither their fleeces from arrows nor their bodies from wounds until their life has been put to an end. Then guards will come and carefully inspect and examine the kind of sheep that get admitted to the pasture of the Lord."

The bride said in reply: "My Lady, do not be angry if I ask a question.

Given that the pope relaxed the austerity of the rule for them, should they be censured for eating meat or anything else set before them?" The Mother answered: "The pope, taking into consideration the weakness and inadequacy of human nature, as put forward by some, reasonably allowed them to eat meat so that they might be more able to work and more fervent in preaching, not that they might appear lazy and lax. For this reason, we excuse the pope for permitting it." Then the bride said: "Dominic arranged for a habit made not of the best nor the worst cloth, but something in between. Should they be censured for wearing finer clothing?" The Mother answered: "Dominic, who dictated his rule inspired by the Spirit of my Son, prescribed that they should not have clothing made from better or more expensive materials so as not to be criticized and branded for wearing a fine and expensive habit and become proud because of it.

He also arranged that they should not have clothing made of the poorest or roughest material so as not to be bothered too much by the roughness of their clothing when they rested after work. Instead, he arranged for them to have clothing of moderate and adequate quality that they would not grow proud over or feel vain about, but that would keep

out the cold and safeguard their continual progress in a life of virtue. Therefore, we commend Dominic for his arrangements but rebuke those friars of his who make changes in their habit for the sake of vanity rather than usefulness.”

Again the bride said: ”Should those friars who build tall and sumptuous churches for your Son be rebuked? Or are they to be censured and criticized if they ask for a lot of donations in order to construct such buildings?” The Mother answered: ”When a church is wide enough to hold all the people coming into it, when its walls are tall enough that the people going into it are not crowded together, when its walls are thick and strong enough to withstand any wind, when its roof is tight and firm enough that it does not leak then they have built it sufficiently. A humble heart in a humble church is more pleasing to God than high walls in which there are bodies inside but hearts outside. Accordingly, they have no need to fill their chests with gold and silver for works of construction, for it did not do Solomon any good to have built such sumptuous buildings when he neglected to love God for whom they were being built.”

As soon as these things had been both said and heard, the older bishop, who above was said to have died, shouted out saying: ”O! O! O! My miter is gone! That which was hidden beneath it can now be seen. Where is the honorable bishop now? Where is the venerable priest? Where is the poor friar? Gone is the bishop who was anointed with oil for his apostolic office and a life of purity. Left behind is the slave of dung stained with grease. Gone is the priest who was consecrated by holy words so as to be able to transform inanimate lifeless bread into the living God. Left behind is the deceitful traitor that greedily sold him who redeemed all men in his love.

Gone is the poor friar who renounced the world through his vow. Now I stand condemned by my pride and ostentation. Yet am I compelled to say the truth: He who condemned me is a just judge. He would rather have set me free through as bitter a death as that which he suffered when he hung on the wood of the cross than that I should receive such a condemnation as

I now experience - but his justice, which he cannot contravene, spoke against it.”

The bride's reply to Christ about how she is afflicted by various useless thoughts, and about how she cannot get rid of them, and Christ's reply to the bride about why God permits this, and about the usefulness of such thoughts and fears with respect to her reward, provided she detests the thoughts and has a prudent fear of God, and about how she should not make light of venial sin lest it lead to mortal sin.

Chapter 19

The Son speaks to the bride: ”What are you worried and anxious about?” She answered: ”I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me.” The Son answered: ”This is truly just. Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will.

But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin. Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent. After human nature was weakened, sin has frequently arisen out of human infirmity. There is no one who does not sin at least venially, but God has in his mercy given mankind the remedy of feeling sorrow for each sin as well as anxiety about not having made sufficient reparation for the sins for which one has made reparation.

God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them,

God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them.

Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person's negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.

After having committed a venial and pardonable sin, he augmented it through habitual practice, trusting to his other good works, without thinking that I might take lesser sins into account. Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was approaching. This is why, as the end approached, his conscience was suddenly agitated and painfully afflicted because he was soon to die and he was afraid to lose the little, temporary good he had loved. Up until a sinner's final moment God abides him, waiting to see if he is going to direct his free will away from his attachment to sin.

However, if a soul's will is not corrected, that soul is then confined by an end without end. What happens is that the devil, knowing that each

person will be judged according to his conscience and intention, labors mightily at the end of life to distract the soul and turn it away from rectitude of intention, and God allows it to happen, since the soul refused to remain vigilant when it ought to have.

Furthermore, do not grow overconfident and presumptuous, if I call anyone my friend or servant as I once called this man. I also called Judas a friend and Nebuchadnezzar a servant. I myself said: 'You are my friends if you carry out my commandments.' In the same way, I now say: 'The people who imitate me are my friends; those who persecute me by scorning my commandments are my enemies.' After it had been said that I had found a man after my own heart, did not David commit the sin of murder? Solomon, who received such wonderful gifts and promises, sinned against goodness and, due to his ingratitude, the promise was fulfilled not in him but in me, the Son of God.

Accordingly, just as when you dictate you add a closing formula at the end, I will also add this closing formula to my locution: If anyone does my will and gives up his own, he will receive the inheritance of eternal life. He who hears my will but does not persevere in doing it, will end up like the worthless and ungrateful servant. However, you should not lose hope, if I call anyone an enemy, since as soon as an enemy changes his will for the better he will be a friend of God. Was not Judas together with the twelve when I said: 'You, my friends, who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones.' At the time Judas was indeed following me, but he will not sit with the twelve. In what way, then, have the words of God been fulfilled? I answer: God, who sees people's hearts and wills, judges and rewards according as he sees.

A human being judges according to what she or he sees on the surface. Therefore, in order that no good person should grow proud or any bad person should lose hope, God has called both good and bad to the apostolate, just as every day he calls both good and bad to higher rank so that everyone whose way of life accords with his office will be glorified in eternity. He who assumes the honor but not the burden is glorified in time and perishes in eternity. Because Judas did not follow me with a perfect

heart, the words 'you who have followed me' did not apply to him, inasmuch as he did not persevere to the point of reward. However, the words did apply to those persons who were to persevere both then and in the time to come, for the Lord, for whom all things are present, sometimes says things in present time that apply to the future, and sometimes speaks about things that are going to be accomplished as if they have already been accomplished. Sometimes, too, he mixes past and future and uses the past for the future, so that no one may presume to analyze the immutable purpose of the Trinity.

Hear one thing more: 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' This man was called to the episcopate but he was not chosen, for he proved ungrateful to the grace of God. Hence, he is a bishop in name but is unworthy of his service and is numbered among those who go down but do not come up again."

ADDENDUM

The Son of God speaks: "Daughter, you are wondering why the one bishop died peacefully, but the other one died a horrible death when the wall fell and utterly crushed him, and he survived for a short while but with a great deal of pain. I answer you: Scripture says - no rather, I myself have said it - that the righteous person, no matter what kind of death he dies, is in the hands of God, but worldly people consider a person righteous only if his departure is peaceful and without pain or shame. God, however, recognizes as righteous the one who has been proved by longstanding temperance or who suffered for the sake of righteousness. The friends of God suffer in this world in order to receive a lesser punishment in the future or to win a greater crown in heaven.

Peter and Paul died for the sake of righteousness, although Peter died a more painful death than Paul, for he loved the flesh more than Paul; he also had to be more conformed to me through his painful death since he held the primacy of my church. Paul, however, inasmuch as he had a greater love of continence and because he had worked harder, died by the sword like a noble knight, for I arrange all things according to merit and

measure. So, in God's judgment it is not how people end their lives or their horrible death that leads to their reward or condemnation, but their intention and will. The case is similar concerning these two bishops. One of them suffered more painfully and died a more terrible death. This reduced his punishment, although it did not gain him the reward of glory, because he did not suffer with a right intention. The other bishop died in glory, but this was due to my hidden justice and did not gain an eternal reward for him, because he did not rectify his intention while he was alive.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the talent represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and about how St. Benedict added to the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to him, and about how the Holy Spirit or the demonic spirit enters the human soul.

Chapter 20

The Mother speaks: ”Daughter, it is written that the man who received five talents earned another five. What does a talent signify if not a gift of the Holy Spirit? Some receive knowledge, others wealth, others wealthy contacts. However, everyone should yield double profits to the Lord, for example, as regards knowledge, by living usefully for themselves and instructing others, as regards wealth and other gifts, by using them rationally and charitably helping others. In this way the good abbot Benedict added to the gift of grace he had received by scorning the goods that are fleeting, by forcing his body to serve his soul, by putting nothing ahead of charity. Anxious not to let his ears be corrupted by empty talk or his eyes by seeing pleasurable sights, he fled to the desert in imitation of that man who, when he had not yet been born, recognized the coming of his dear Savior and leaped for joy in the womb of his mother.

Benedict would have gained heaven without the desert, inasmuch as the world was dead to him and his heart was completely full of God. However, it pleased God to call Benedict to the mountain so that many would come to know him and many would be inspired by his example to

seek a life of perfection. This blessed man's body was like a sack of earth that enclosed the fire of the Holy Spirit and shut out the fire of the devil from his heart. Physical fire is enkindled by both air and a man's breath. Similarly, the Holy Spirit enters the human soul, either through personal inspiration or by lifting the mind up to God through some human action or divine locution. The spirit of the devil likewise visits its own people. However, the two spirits differ immeasurably, for the Holy Spirit makes the soul hot in her search for God but does not make her burn in her body. He shines his light in purity and modesty but does not darken the mind with evil. The evil Spirit, on the other hand, causes the mind to burn with carnal desires and makes it terribly embittered. He darkens the soul by making her unreflective and pushes her remorselessly toward the things of the earth.

In order that the good fire that was in Benedict might ignite many people, God called him to the mountain and, after many other flames had been called together along with him, Benedict made a great bonfire of them by the Spirit of God. He composed a rule of life for them through the Spirit of God. Through this rule many people have attained the same perfection as he. Now, however, there are many firebrands cast off from the bonfire of St. Benedict and they lie spread out everywhere, having coldness instead of heat, darkness instead of light. If they were gathered together in the fire, they would surely give off fire and heat.”

The Mother's words to her daughter, showing the greatness and perfection of the life of St. Benedict by means of a comparison; also, the soul that bears worldly fruit is represented as a fruitless tree, the pride of mind as flint, and the cold soul as crystal; and about three noteworthy sparks arising from these three things, i.e., from the crystal, the flint, and the tree.

Chapter 21

The Mother speaks: "I told you before that the body of blessed Benedict was like a sack that was disciplined and ruled but did not rule. His soul was like an angel, giving off a lot of heat and flame. I will show

you this by means of a comparison. It is as though there were three fires. The first of them was lit with myrrh and produced a sweet odor. The second was lit with dry kindle. It produced hot embers and a splendid blaze. The third was lit with olive oil. It produced flames, light, and heat. These three fires refer to three persons, and the three persons refer to three states in the world.

The first was the state of those who reflected on God's love and surrendered their wills into the hands of others. They accepted poverty and humility in place of worldly vanity and pride, and loved continence and purity in place of intemperance. Theirs was the fire of myrrh, for, just as myrrh is pungent but keeps demons away and quenches thirst, so too their abstinence was pungent to the body yet quenched their inordinate desires and drained away all the power of the demons.

The second state was that of those who had the following thought: 'Why do we love worldly honors? They are nothing but the air that brushes past our ears. Why do we love gold? It is nothing but yellow dirt. What is the end of the body if not rot and ashes? How does it help us to desire earthly goods?

All things are vanity. Therefore, we shall live and work for one purpose alone, that God may be glorified in us and that others may burn with love for God through our word and example.' The fire of such people was that of the dry kindle, inasmuch as they were dead to the love of the world and all of them produced hot embers of justice and the blaze of holy evangelization.

The third state was that of those with a fervent love for the passion of Christ who longed with all their hearts to die for Christ. Theirs was the fire of olive oil. The olive contains oil that gives off a scorching heat when it is burned. In the same way, these people were drenched in the oil of divine grace. Through it they produced the light of divine knowledge, the heat of fervent charity, the strength of upright conduct.

These three fires spread far and wide. The first of them was lit in hermits and religious, as described by Jerome who, inspired by the Holy

Spirit, found their lives wonderful and exemplary. The second fire was lit in the confessors and doctors of the church, while the third was in the martyrs who despised their own flesh for God's sake, and others who would have despised it had they obtained help from God. Blessed Benedict was sent to people belonging to these three states or fires. He fused the three fires together in such a way that the unwise were enlightened, the cold-hearted were inflamed, the fervent became more fervent still. Thus, with these fires began the Benedictine order that guided each person according to his disposition and intellectual capacity along the way of salvation and eternal happiness.

From the sack of Blessed Benedict blew the sweetness of the Holy Spirit through which many monasteries were started. However, now the Holy Spirit has left the sack of many of his brothers, for the heat of the ashes has been extinguished and the firebrands lie scattered about, giving off neither heat nor light but the smoke of impurity and greed. However, God has given me three sparks so as to bring consolation to many people. The three stand for many sparks. The first spark was obtained with a crystal from the heat and light of the sun and has already settled on the dry kindle in order that a great fire may be made from it. The second spark was obtained with hard flint.

The third spark came from a fruitless tree whose roots were growing and that was spreading its foliage. The crystal, that cold and fragile stone, represents the soul who, while she may be cold in her love for God, still seeks perfection in her heart and will and prays for God's help. Her intention thus leads her to God and earns for her an increase of trials that makes her grow cold toward base temptations, until God enlightens the heart and settles in the soul now emptied of desire, so that she no longer wants to live for anything but the glory of God. Flint represents pride. What is harder than the intellectual pride of a person who wants to be praised by everyone, yet longs to be called humble and to seem devout?

What is more loathsome than a soul that places herself ahead of everyone else in her thoughts and cannot put up with being rebuked or taught by anyone? Nevertheless, many proud persons pray humbly to God

that pride and ambition be removed from their hearts. God, therefore, with the cooperation of their good will, presents adversities to their hearts and at times consolations that draw them away from worldly things and spur them on toward heavenly. The fruitless tree represents the soul that is fed on pride and bears worldly fruit and desires to have the world and all its privileges.

However, because this soul has a fear of eternal death, she uproots many of the saplings of sins she would otherwise commit if she had no such fear. Because of her fear, God draws near to the soul and inspires his grace in her so that the useless tree might become fruitful. By means of such sparks of fire, the order of Blessed Benedict, which now seems abject and abandoned to many people, should be renewed.”

The Mother's words to her daughter about a monk with a harlot's heart in his breast, and about how he apostatized from God through his own will and greed and his desertion of the angelic life.

Chapter 22

The Mother speaks to the bride again: ”What do you see that is blameworthy in this man here?” She answered: ”That he rarely says Mass.” The Mother said to her: ”It is not for that reason that he is to be sentenced. There are many men who, mindful of their deeds, refrain from saying Mass but are no less acceptable to me. What else do you see in him?” And she said: ”That he does not wear the habit established by blessed Benedict.” The Mother replied: ”It often happens that a custom gets started, and those who know it to be a bad custom but still follow it deserve blame. However, those who do not know the correct traditions and would even prefer a simpler habit, had it not been for the long-standing custom, are not to be so easily and thoughtlessly condemned. Listen, however, and I will tell you three reasons why he should be blamed.

First, because his heart, in which God should rest, is in the breast of harlots. Second, because he has given up the little he possessed but longs for the greater possessions of others; having promised to deny himself, he completely follows his own will and whim. Third, because God made his soul as beautiful as an angel and for that reason he should be leading an angelic life, but now his soul instead bears the image of that angel who apostatized from God through pride. People account him a great man, but God knows what sort he is before God. God is like a person who closes his fist about something and keeps it hidden from others until he opens his fist. God chooses weak creatures and keeps their crowns hidden in the present life until he rewards each person according to his deeds.”

EXPLANATION

This man was a very worldly minded abbot who cared nothing for souls and who died suddenly without the sacraments. The Holy Spirit said about him: ”O soul, you loved the earth and now the earth has received you. You were dead in your life and now you will not have my life nor be a sharer with me, since you loved the company of him who apostatized from me through pride and despised true humility.”

The answer of God the Father to the bride's prayers for sinners, and about three witnesses on earth and three in heaven, and about how the whole Trinity bears witness to the bride, and about how she is his bride through faith, like all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church.

Chapter 23

“O my most sweet God, I pray for sinners, to whose company I belong, that you deign to have mercy on them.” God the Father answered: ”I hear and know your intention, your loving entreaty will therefore be fulfilled. As John says in today's epistle, or, rather, as I say through John: 'There are three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and three in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are your witnesses. The Spirit, who protected you in the womb of your

mother, bears witness concerning your soul that you belong to God through the baptismal faith that your parents professed in your stead.

The baptismal water bears witness that you are the daughter of Christ's human nature through regeneration and the healing of original sin. The blood of Jesus Christ that redeemed you bears witness that you are the daughter of God and removed from the power of the devil by the sacraments of the church. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three Persons but one in substance and power, we bear witness that you are ours through faith, just as are all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church. And so that you give witness that you want to do our will, go and receive the body and blood of Christ's human nature from the hand of the priest in order that the Son may bear witness that you belong to him whose body you receive to strengthen your soul. The Father, who is in the Son, bears witness that you belong to the Father and to the Son. The Holy Spirit, who is in the Father and the Son, the Spirit being in both, bears witness that, through true faith and love, you belong to the Three Persons and One God."

To the prayers of the bride for infidels, Jesus Christ replies that God is glorified through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition; he illustrates this for her by means of an allegory in which a maiden represents the church or the soul and her nine brothers represent the nine orders of angels, the king represents Christ, while his three sons represent the three states of mankind.

Chapter 24

"O my Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that your faith may be spread among the infidels, and that good people may be set even more aflame with your love and that wicked people may convert." The Son answered: "You are grieved because little honor is given to God and with all your heart you wish that God's honor were perfected. I will offer you an allegory that will help you to understand that honor is given to God even through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition. Once there was a wise and beautiful, rich and virtuous maiden. She had nine brothers, each

of whom loved her as his very heart, and you might say that each one's heart was in her. In the kingdom where the maiden lived, there was a law that said that whoever showed honor would be honored, whoever robbed would be robbed, whoever committed rape would be beheaded.

The king of the realm had three sons. The first son loved the maiden and offered her golden shoes and a golden belt, a ring for her hand and a crown for her head. The second son coveted the property of the maiden and robbed her. The third son coveted her maidenhood and sought to rape her. The king's three sons were captured by the maiden's nine brothers and presented to the king. Her brothers told him: 'Your sons desired our sister.

The first honored and loved her with his whole heart. The second one despoiled her. The third was ready to risk his life just to rape her. They were seized at the very moment when they were fully intent on carrying out what we have said.' Once the king heard this, he answered them, saying: 'They are all my sons, and I love all of them equally. However, I neither can nor wish to go against justice. Instead I intend to judge my sons as I would my servants. You, my son, who wanted to honor the maiden, come and receive honor and the crown along with your father! You, my son, who coveted the maiden's property and snatched it away, you shall go to prison until the stolen goods have been restored. Indeed, I have heard evidence concerning you that you were sorry for your crime and would have returned the stolen goods, but were prevented from doing so by your sudden and unexpected arrest. For this reason you will remain incarcerated until the last farthing is restored. But you, my son, who made every attempt to rape this maiden, are not sorry for your crime.

Therefore, your punishment will be multiplied by the number of ways in which you attempted to deflower the maiden.' All the brothers of the maiden answered: 'May you, the judge, be praised for your justice! For you would never have issued such a judgment had there not been virtue in you and fairness in your justice and mercy in your fairness.'

The maiden symbolizes the holy church. She is by nature outstanding by reason of her faith, beautiful by reason of the seven sacraments, laudable by reason of her conduct and virtue, lovable by reason of her

fruits, for she reveals the true way to eternity. The holy church has three sons, so to speak, and these three stand for many. The first are those who love God with their whole heart. The second are those who love temporal goods for their own honor. The third are those who put their own will ahead of God. The maidenhood of the church represents human souls created solely by divine power.

Accordingly, the first son offers golden shoes by having contrition for his misdeeds, omissions, and sins. He offers clothes by following the precepts of the law and keeping the evangelical counsels as far as possible. He puts together a belt by firmly resolving to persevere in continence and chastity. He places a ring on her hand by firmly believing in what the catholic church teaches about the future judgment and life everlasting. The gem of the ring is hope, steadfastly hoping that no sin is so abominable that it cannot be wiped away through penance and the resolution to improve. He puts a crown on her head by having true charity. Just as a crown has various jewels, so too charity has various virtues. And the head of the soul or, rather, of the church is my Body. Whoever loves and reverences it is rightly called a son of God.

A person who loves the holy church and his own soul in such away has nine brothers, that is, the nine orders of angels, for he will be their companion and fellow in eternal life. The angels embrace the holy church with all their love, as if she were in the heart of each one of them. It is not stones and walls that make up the holy church but the souls of the righteous, and, for this reason, the angels rejoice over their honor and progress as though over their own.

The second brother or, rather, son, represents those who reject the authority of the holy church and live for worldly honor and the love of the flesh, who deform the beauty of virtue and live after their own desires, but repent toward the end and are sorry for their evil deeds. They must go to purgatory until they can be reconciled to God through the works and prayers of the church. The third son represents those who are a scandal to their own soul, not caring whether they perish forever, as long as they can

carry out their desires. The nine orders of angels seek justice because of these people, inasmuch as they refuse to be converted through penance.

Thus, when God delivers his sentence, the angels praise him for his unbending fairness. When God's honor is thus perfected, they rejoice over his might, because even the evil of evil men serves to give him honor. This is why, when you see immoral persons, you should have compassion on them and rejoice over the eternal honor of God. God does not will anything evil, for he is the Creator of all things and the only being truly good in himself, but, as a most just judge, he still permits many things to be done in regard to which he is honored in heaven and on earth on account of his fairness and his hidden goodness.”

The Mother's lament to her daughter that the most innocent lamb, Jesus Christ, is neglected by his creatures in modern times.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: ”My lament is that on this day the most innocent lamb was carried who best knew how to walk. On this day, that little boy was silent who best knew how to speak. On this day, the most innocent little boy who never sinned was circumcised. This is why, although I cannot be angry, still I seem to be angry because the supreme Lord who became a little boy is forgotten and neglected by his creatures.”

Christ's explanation to the bride of the ineffable mystery of the Trinity, and about how diabolical sinners obtain God's mercy through contrition and a will to improve, and his response as to how he has mercy on everyone, both Jews and others, and about the double judgment, that is, the sentence for those who are to be condemned and for those who are to be saved.

Chapter 26

The Son speaks: "I am the Creator of heaven and earth, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, not three gods but one God. Now you might ask, if there are three Persons, why are there not three gods? My answer is that God is nothing other than power itself, wisdom itself, goodness itself, from which come all power beneath or above the heavens, all conceivable wisdom and the kindness. Thus, God is triune and one, triune in Persons, one in nature. The power and the wisdom is the Father, from whom all things come and who is prior to all, deriving his power from nowhere else but himself for all eternity.

The power and wisdom are also the Son, equal to the Father, deriving his power not from himself but as begotten ineffably from the Father, the beginning from the beginning, never separated from the Father. The power and wisdom are also the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, eternal with the Father and the Son, equal in majesty and might. Thus, one God and three Persons. The three have the same nature, the same operation and will, the same glory and might.

God is thus one in essence, but the Persons are distinct in the proper quality of each. The Father is wholly in the Son and Spirit, and the Son is wholly in the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit is wholly in both, in one divine nature, not as prior and posterior but in an ineffable way. In God there is neither prior nor posterior, nothing greater or less than another, but the Trinity is wholly and ineffably equal. Well has it been written that God is great and greatly to be praised.

However, now I can complain that I am little praised and unknown to many people, because everyone is following his own will but few follow mine. Be you steadfast and humble, and do not exalt yourself in your mind if I show you other people's trials, and do not betray their names unless you are instructed to do so. Their trials are not shown to you to shame them but in order that they may be converted and come to know God's justice and mercy. Nor should you shun them as condemned, for even if I should say today that a certain person is wicked, should he call on me tomorrow with contrition and a will to improve, I am prepared to forgive

him. And that person whom I yesterday called wicked, today, due to his contrition, I declare him to be so dear a friend of mine that if his contrition remains steadfast, I forgive him not only his sin but even remit the punishment of sin.

You might understand this with a metaphor. It is as though there were two drops of quicksilver and both were heading toward each other in haste. If nothing but a single atom remained to keep them from joining, still God would be powerful enough to prevent them from coming together. Likewise, if any sinner were so rooted in diabolical deeds that he was standing at the very brink of destruction, he could still obtain forgiveness and mercy, if he called upon God with contrition and a will to improve. Now, given that I am so merciful, you might ask why I am not merciful toward pagans and Jews, some of whom, if they were instructed in the true faith, would be ready to lay down their lives for God. My response is that I have mercy on everyone, on pagans as well as Jews, nor is any creature beyond my mercy.

With leniency and mercy I will judge both those people who, learning that their faith is not the true one, fervently long for the true faith, as well as those people who believe the faith they profess to be the best one, because no other faith has ever been preached to them, and who wholeheartedly do what they can. You see, there is a double judgment, namely the one for those to be condemned and the one for those to be saved. The sentence of condemnation for Christians will have no mercy in it. To them will belong eternal punishment and shadows and a will hardened against God. The sentence for those Christians to be saved will be the vision of God and glorification in God and goodwill toward God. Excluded from these rewards are pagans and Jews as well as bad and false Christians. Although they did not have the right faith, they did have conscience as their judge and believed that the one whom they worshipped and offended was God.

But the ones whose intention and actions were and are for justice and against sin will, along with the less bad Christians, share a punishment of mercy in the midst of sufferings due to their love of justice and their hatred

of sin. However, they will not have consolation in the service of glory and of the vision of God. They will not behold him due to their lack of baptism, because some temporal circumstance or some hidden decision of God made them draw back from profitably seeking and obtaining salvation. If there was nothing that held them back from seeking the true God and being baptized, neither fear nor the effort required nor loss of goods or privileges, but only some impediment that overcame their human weakness, then I, who saw Cornelius and the centurion while they were still not baptized, know how to give them a higher and more perfect reward in accordance with their faith.

One thing is the ignorance of sinners, another that of those who are pious but impeded. Likewise, too, one thing is the baptism of water, another that of blood, another that of wholehearted desire. God, who knows the hearts of all people, knows how to take all of these circumstances into account. I am begotten without beginning, begotten eternally from the beginning. I was born in time at the end of times. From the commencement I have known how to give individual persons the rewards they deserve and I give to each according as he deserves. Not the least little good done for the glory of God will go without its reward. This is why you should give many thanks to God that you were born of Christian parents in the age of salvation, for many people have longed to obtain and see that which is offered to Christians and yet have not obtained it.”

The bride's prayer to the Lord for Rome, and about the vast multitude of holy martyrs resting in Rome, and about the three degrees of Christian perfection, and about a vision of hers and how Christ appears to her and expounds and explains the vision to her.

Chapter 27

“O Mary, I have been unkind, but still I call you to my aid. I pray to you that you may graciously pray for the excellent and holy city of Rome. I can physically see that some of the churches are abandoned where the

bones of the saints lie in rest. Some of them are inhabited, but the heart and conduct of their rector are far from God. Procure mercy for them, for I have heard it is written that there are seven thousand martyrs for any day in the year at Rome. Although their souls do not receive less honor in heaven because their bones are held in contempt here on earth, nevertheless I ask you that greater honor may be given to your saints and to the relics of your saints here on earth and that the devotion of the people may be stirred up in this way.”

The Mother answered: ”If you measured out a plot of land a hundred feet in length and as much in width and sowed it so full of pure grains of wheat that the grains were so close together that there was just the space of a thumb left between them, and even if each grain gave fruit a hundredfold, there would still be more Roman martyrs and confessors from the time when Peter came to Rome in humility until Celestine left from the throne of pride and returned to his solitary life.

But I am referring to those martyrs and confessors who against infidelity preached true fidelity and against pride preached humility and who died or were ready in intention to die for the truth of the faith. Peter and many others were so wise and zealous in spreading the word of God that they would readily have died for each and every person if they had been able. However, they were also concerned lest they be taken suddenly from the presence of those people whom they nourished with their words of consolation and preaching, for they desired to save souls more than to save their own lives and reputation. They were also prudent and hence went to work in secret during times of persecution in order to win and gather together a greater number of souls. Between these two, I mean, between Peter and Celestine, not everyone has been good, but not everyone has been bad either.

Now let us set up three degrees or ranks, as you yourself were doing: positive, comparative, and superlative, or good, better, and best. To the first rank belong those whose thoughts were the following: 'We believe whatever the holy church teaches. We do not want to defraud anyone but to give back whatever has been fraudulently taken, and we want to serve God

with all our heart.' There were people like that in the time of Romulus, the founder of Rome, and, after their own beliefs, they thought as follows: 'We understand and recognize through creatures that God is the Creator of all things and therefore we want to love him above all else.' There were also many who thought like this: 'We have heard from the Hebrews that the true God has revealed himself through manifest miracles. So, if we only knew where to place our trust, we would place it there.' We can say that all of these belonged to the first rank.

At the appointed time, Peter arrived in Rome. He raised some people to the positive rank, others to the comparative rank, and still others to the superlative. To the positive rank belonged those who accepted the true faith and lived in matrimony or in another honorable state. To the comparative rank belonged those who gave up their possessions out of love for God, and set others the example of a good life in words and example and deed and did not put anything ahead of Christ. To the superlative rank belonged those who offered their physical lives out of love for God. But let us make a search of these ranks to find out where there is now a more fervent love of God. Let us search among the knights and the learned. Let us search among the religious and those who have scorned the world. These people would be thought to belong to the comparative and superlative ranks. Yet, indeed, very few are found.

There is no life more austere than the life of a knight, if he truly follows his calling. While a monk is obliged to wear a cowl, a knight is obliged to wear something heavier, namely, a coat of mail. While it is hard for a monk to fight against the will of the flesh, it is harder for a knight to go forth among armed enemies. While a monk must sleep on a hard bed, it is harder still for the knight to sleep with his weapons. While a monk finds abstinence a burden and trouble, it is harder for the knight to be constantly burdened by fear for his life. Christian knighthood was not established out of greed for worldly possessions but in order to defend the truth and spread the true faith. For this reason, the knightly rank and the monastic rank should be thought to correspond to the superlative or comparative rank. However, those in every rank have deserted their honorable calling, since the love for God has been perverted into worldly greed. If but a single

florin were offered them, most of them in all three ranks would keep silent about the truth rather than lose the florin and speak the truth.”

The bride speaks again: ”I also saw what looked like many gardens on earth. I saw roses and lilies in the gardens. In one spacious plot of land I saw a field a hundred feet in length and as much in width. In each foot of land there were seven grains of wheat sown and each grain gave fruit a hundredfold.

Then I heard a voice saying: 'O Rome, Rome, your walls have crumbled. Your city gates are therefore unguarded. Your vessels are being sold. Your altars have therefore been abandoned. The living sacrifice along with the incense of matins is burned in the portico. The sweet and holy fragrance does not come from the holy of holies.' ”

At once the Son of God appeared and said to the bride: ”I will tell you the meaning of the things you have seen. The land you saw represents the entire territory where the Christian faith is now. The gardens represent those places where God's saints received their crowns. However, in paganism, that is, in Jerusalem and in other places, there were many of God's elect, but their places have not been shown to you now. The field that is a hundred paces in length and as much in width stands for Rome. If all the gardens of the whole world were to be brought alongside Rome, Rome would certainly be as great as to the number of martyrs (I am speaking materially), because it is the place chosen for the love of God.

The wheat you saw in each foot of land represents those who have entered heaven through mortification of the flesh, contrition, and innocence of life. The few roses represent the martyrs who are red from the blood they shed in different regions. The lilies are the confessors who preached and confirmed the holy faith by word and deed. Today I can say of Rome what the prophet said of Jerusalem: 'Once righteousness lodged in her and her princes were princes of peace. Now she has turned to dross and her princes have become murderers.'

O Rome, if you knew your days, you would surely weep and not rejoice. Rome was in olden days like a tapestry dyed in beautiful colors

and woven with noble threads. Its soil was dyed in red, that is, in the blood of martyrs, and woven, that is, mixed with the bones of the saints. Now her gates are abandoned, in that their defenders and guardians have turned to avarice. Her walls are thrown down and left unguarded, in that no one cares that souls are being lost. Rather, the clergy and the people, who are the walls of God, have scattered away to work for carnal advantage. The sacred vessels are sold with scorn, in that God's sacraments are administered for money and worldly favors.

The altars are abandoned, in that the priest who celebrates with the vessels has hands empty as to love for God but keeps his eyes on the collection; although he has God in his hands, his heart is empty of God, for it is full of the vain things of the world. The holy of holies, where the highest sacrifice used to be consumed, represents the desire to see and enjoy God. From this desire, there should rise up love for God and neighbor and the fragrance of temperance and virtue. However, the sacrifice is now consumed in the portico, that is, in the world, in that the love for God has completely turned into worldly vanity and lack of temperance.

Such is Rome, as you have seen it physically. Many altars are abandoned, the collection is spent in taverns, and the people who give to it have more time for the world than for God. But you should know that countless souls ascended into heaven from the time of humble Peter until Boniface ascended the throne of pride. Yet Rome is still not without friends of God. If they were given some help, they would cry out to the Lord and he would have mercy on them.”

The Virgin instructs the bride about knowing how to love and about four cities where four loves are found and about which of these is properly called perfect love.

Chapter 28

The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "Daughter, do you love me?" She answers: "My Lady, teach me to love, for my soul is defiled with false love, seduced by a deadly poison, and cannot understand true love." The Mother says: "I will teach you. There are four cities where there are four kinds of love, that is, if we are to call each of them love, given that no love can properly be found except where God and the soul are united in the true union of the virtues. The first city is the city of trial. This is the world.

A man is placed there to be tested as to whether he loves God or not.

This is in order that he may come to know his own weakness and acquire the virtues by which he may return to glory, so that, having been cleansed on earth, he may receive a glorious crown in heaven. One finds disordered love in this city, because the body is loved more than the soul, because there is a more fervent desire for temporal than spiritual good, because vice is honored and virtue despised, because travels abroad are more appreciated than one's home country, because a little mortal being gets more respect and honor than God whose reign is everlasting.

The second city is the city of cleansing where the dirt of the soul is washed away. God has willed to set up places where a person who has become proud in the negligent use of his freedom yet without losing his fear of God may be cleansed before receiving his crown. One finds imperfect love in this city, inasmuch as God is loved because of a person's hope of being released from captivity but not out of an ardent affection. This is due to weariness and bitterness in atoning one's guilt. The third city is the city of sorrow. This is hell. Here one finds a love for every kind of evil and impurity, a love for every kind of envy and obstinacy. God governs this city as well. This he does by means of balanced justice, the due moderation of punishments, the restraint of evil, and the fairness of the sentences that takes each sinner's merits into account.

Some of the condemned are greater sinners, others lesser. The conditions for their punishment and retribution are set up accordingly. Although all the condemned are enclosed in darkness, not all of them experience it in one and the same way. Darkness differs from darkness, horror from horror, hell-fire from hell-fire. God's rule is one of justice and

mercy everywhere, even in hell. Thus, those who have sinned deliberately have their particular punishment, those who have sinned out of weakness have a different one, those who are being held only because of the damage done by original sin have a different one again. While the torment of these latter consists in the lack of the beatific vision and of the light of the elect, still they come close to mercy and joy in the sense that they do not experience horrible punishments, since they bear no effects of any evil deeds of their own doing. Otherwise, if God did not ordain the number and limit of the punishments, the devil would never show any limits in tormenting them.

The fourth city is the city of glory. Here one finds perfect love and the ordered charity that desires nothing but God or but for the sake of God. Hence, if you would reach the perfection of this city, your love needs four qualities: it must be ordered, pure, true, and perfect. Your love is ordered when you love the body only for the sake of sustaining yourself, when you love the world without superfluities, your neighbor for God's sake, your friend for the sake of purity of life, and your enemy for the sake of the reward. Love is pure when sin is not loved alongside virtue, when bad habits are scorned, when sin is not taken lightly.

Love is true when you love God with all your heart and affections, when you take the glory and fear of God into prior consideration in all your actions, when you commit not the least little sin while trusting to your good deeds, when you practice temperance prudently without growing weak from too much fervor, when you do not have an inclination to sin out of cowardice or ignorance of temptations. Love is perfect when nothing is as enjoyable to a person as God. This kind of love begins in the present but is consummated in heaven. Love, then, this perfect and true kind of love! Everyone who does not have it shall be cleansed, no matter whether he is faithful or fervent or a child or baptized. Otherwise he will go to the city of horror.

Just as God is one, so too there is one faith, one baptism, one perfection of glory and reward in the church of Peter. Accordingly, anyone who longs to reach the one God must have one and the same love and will

as the one God. Miserable are those who say: 'It is enough for me to be the least in heaven. I do not want to be perfect.' What a senseless thought! How can someone who is imperfect be there where everyone is perfect either through innocence of life or the innocence of childhood or by cleansing or by faith and goodwill?"

The bride's praise for the Virgin containing an allegory about Solomon's temple and the unexplainable truth of the unity of the divine and human natures, and about how the temples of priests are painted with vanity.

Chapter 29

“Blessed are you, Mary, Mother of God. You are Solomon's temple whose walls were of gold, whose roof shone brightly, whose floor was paved with precious gems, whose whole array was shining, whose whole interior was fragrant and delightful to behold. In every way you are like the temple of Solomon where the true Salomon walked and sat and where he placed the ark of glory and the bright lamp. You, Blessed Virgin, are the temple of that Salomon who made peace between God and man, who reconciled sinners, who gave life to the dead and freed the poor from their oppressor. Your body and soul became the temple of the Godhead. They were a roof for God's love, beneath which the Son of God lived with you in joy after having proceeded from the Father.

The floor of the temple was your life arrayed in the careful practice of the virtues. No privilege was lacking to you, but everything you had was stable, humble, devout, and perfect. The walls of the temple were foursquare, for you were not troubled by any shame, you were not proud about any of your privileges, no impatience disturbed you, you aimed at nothing but the glory and love of God. The paintings of your temple were the constant inspirations of the Holy Spirit that raised your soul so high that there is no virtue in any other creature that is not more fully and perfectly in you. God walked in this temple when he poured his sweet

presence into your limbs. He rested in you when the divine and human natures became joined.

Blessed are you, Virgin most blessed! In you God almighty became a little boy, the Lord most ancient became a tiny child, God the eternal and invisible Creator became a visible creature. I beg you, therefore, since you are the kindest and most powerful Lady, look upon me and have mercy on me! You are indeed the Mother of Solomon, although not of him who was the son of David but of him who is the Father of David and the Lord of that Solomon who built the wonderful temple that truly prefigured you. A son will listen to his Mother, especially to so great a Mother as you. Your son Solomon was, as it were, once asleep in you.

Entreat him, then, that he may be wakeful and watch over me so that no sinful pleasure may sting me, so that my contrition for sins may be lasting, so that I may be dead to the love of the world, patient in perseverance, fruitful in penance. There is no virtue in me but there is this prayer: 'Have mercy, Mary!' My temple is completely the opposite of yours. It is dark with vice, muddled with lust, ruined by the worms of desire, unsteady due to pride, ready to fall due to worldly vanity."

The Mother answered: "Blessed be God who has inspired your heart to offer this greeting to me so that you may understand how much goodness and sweetness there is in God. But why do you compare me to Solomon and to the temple of Solomon, when I am the Mother of him whose lineage has neither beginning nor end, of him who is said to have neither father nor mother, that is, of Melchisedech? He is said to have been a priest and it is to priests that the temple of God is entrusted, which is why I am Virgin and Mother of the high priest. And yet, I tell you that I am both the mother of King Solomon and the Mother of the peace-making priest, for the Son of God, who is also my Son, is both priest and King of kings.

It was indeed in my temple that he dressed himself spiritually in the priestly garb in which he offered a sacrifice for the world. In the royal city he was crowned with a royal but cruel crown. Outside the city, like a

mighty warrior, he held the field and kept the war away. My grievance is that this same Son of mine is now forgotten and neglected by priests and kings. The kings pride themselves on their palaces, their armies, their worldly successes and honors. The priests grow proud of the goods and possessions that belong to souls. You said the temple was painted in gold. But the temples of priests are painted in worldly vanity and curiosity, since simony rules at the highest levels. The ark of the covenant has been taken away, the lamp of the virtues extinguished, the table of devotion abandoned.”

The bride answered: ”O Mother of mercy, have mercy on them and pray for them!” The Mother said to her: ”From the beginning God so loved his own that not only are they heard when they pray for themselves, but others also experience the effects of their prayers thanks to them. Two things are necessary if prayers for others are to be heard, namely the intention of giving up sin and the intention of making progress in virtue. My prayers will benefit anyone who has both of these.”

Saint Agnes's words to the bride about the love the bride should have for the Virgin, using the metaphor of flowers, and the glorious Virgin's description of God's boundless and everlasting kindness as compared to our lack of kindness and ingratitude, and about how the friends of God should not lose their peace in the midst of hardship.

Chapter 30

Blessed Agnes speaks to the bride, saying: ”My daughter, love the Mother of mercy. She is like the flower or reed shaped like a sword. This flower has two sharp extremities and a graceful tip. In height and width it excels all other flowers. Similarly, Mary is the flower of flowers, a flower that grew in a valley and extended over all the mountains. A flower, I say, that was raised in Nazareth and spread itself on Mount Lebanon. This flower had, first of all, height, in the sense that the blessed Queen of heaven excels every creature in dignity and power. Mary also had two sharp edges or leaves, that is, the sorrow in her heart over her Son's

passion along with her steadfast resistance to the attacks of the devil by never consenting to sin.

The old man prophesied truly when he said: 'A sword shall pierce your soul. In a spiritual sense she received as many sword-strokes as the number of wounds and sores she saw her Son receive and that she also had already foreseen. Mary had also a great width, I mean, her mercy. She is and was so kind and merciful that she preferred to suffer any hardship rather than let souls be lost. United now with her Son, she has not forgotten her native goodness but, rather, extends her mercy to all, even to the worst of men. Just as the sun brightens and sets ablaze the heavens and earth, so too there is no one who does not experience Mary's sweet kindness, if he asks for it. Mary also had a graceful tip, I mean, her humility.

Her humility made her pleasing to the angel when she called herself the Lord's handmaid, although she was being chosen to be his Lady. She conceived the Son of God in humility, not wanting to please the proud. She ascended the highest throne through humility, loving nothing but God himself. Come forward, then, Conduit, and greet the Mother of mercy, for she has now arrived!"

Then Mary appeared and replied: "Agnes, you used a noun, add an adjective, too!" Agnes said to her: "I might say 'most beautiful' or 'most virtuous,' for that belongs rightfully to no one but you, the Mother of everyone's salvation." The Mother of God answered Blessed Agnes: "You speak truthfully, for I am the most powerful of all. Therefore, I myself will add an adjective and a noun, namely 'Conduit' of the Holy Spirit. Come, Conduit, and listen to me! You are sad because this saying is bandied about among men: 'Let us live as we like, since God is easily pleased. Let us make use of the world and its honor while we can, since the world was made for the sake of mankind.' Indeed, my daughter, a saying like that does not come from love of God nor does it tend or lead toward the love of God. However, God does not forget his love because of it but in every hour displays his kindness in return for human ingratitude. He is like a craftsman crafting some great work. At times he heats up the iron, at times

he lets it cool. God is the supreme craftsman who made the world out of nothing and has shown his love to Adam and his posterity.

But the human race cooled down to such an extent that they committed enormous crimes and almost regarded God as nothing. For that reason, God had mercy and gave a benevolent warning first, but then revealed his justice by means of the flood. After the flood, God made his pact with Abraham, showing him signs of affection, and led his children by means of great signs and wonders. He gave the law to his people from his own lips, confirming his words and precepts by the most evident of signs. As time went by, again the people grew cold and fell into such insanity that they started to worship idols. Wanting to heat up the cold-hearted once more, God in his kindness sent his own Son into the world.

He taught the true way to heaven and gave an example of true humility to imitate. Although many have now quite forgotten him in their neglect, he still displays and reveals his merciful words. However, things will not be accomplished all at once, no more now than before. Prior to the coming of the flood, the people were warned first and were given time for repentance. Similarly, before Israel entered the promised land, the people were first tested and the promise was delayed for a time. God could have led the people for forty days without delaying for forty years, but his justice demanded that the ingratitude of the people should become apparent and that God's mercy should be made manifest so as to render his future people so much the more humble.

It would be great audacity to ask why God made his people suffer so much or why there can be eternal punishment, given that a life in sin cannot last forever. It would be as great audacity as to try to reason out and comprehend the eternity of God. God is eternal and incomprehensible. His justice and recompensation is eternal, his mercy is beyond understanding. If God had not already shown justice to the first angels, how would we know of his justice and his fair judgment of everything?

If, again, he had not had mercy on humanity by creating it and then freeing it through innumerable miracles, how would we know that his

goodness was so great or his love so immense and so perfect? Because God is eternal, his justice is eternal and there is neither increase nor decrease in it. It is as when someone plans ahead to do his work in such a way and on such a day.

When God exercises his justice or mercy, he manifests it by accomplishing it, since present, past, and future are known to him from eternity.

God's friends should persevere patiently in the love of God and not lose their peace, even though they may see worldly men and women prospering. God is like a good washing-woman who puts the dirty clothes in the waves to make them cleaner and brighter by the motion of the water, paying close attention to the water currents so that the clothes do not sink beneath the waves. Likewise, God places his friends in the waves of poverty and hardship in the present time in order to cleanse them for eternal life, while keeping close watch so that they are not plunged into excessive sorrow or unbearable hardship.”

Christ's words to the bride offering the admirable allegory of a doctor and king, and about how the doctor symbolizes Christ, and about how those whom people think will be condemned are frequently saved while those whom people or worldly opinion think will be saved are condemned.

Chapter 31

The Son speaks to the bride, saying: ”A doctor came to a distant and unknown realm in which the king did not rule but was ruled, because he had the heart of a hare. Seated on his throne, he seemed like an ass with a crown. His people devoted themselves to gluttony, forgetting honesty and justice, and hating everyone who spoke to them about the good that awaited in the future. When the doctor presented himself to the king, saying he was from a lovely country and affirming that he had come because of his knowledge of human infirmities, the king, in wonder at the man and his words, answered:

'I have two prisoners to be beheaded tomorrow. One of them can scarcely breathe, but the other is more robust and stouter now than when he entered prison. Go to them, look at their faces and see which of them is in better health.' After the doctor had gone and examined them, he said to the king: 'The man whom you say is robust is almost a corpse and will not survive. As for the other, however, there is good hope.' The king asked him: 'How do you know that?'

The doctor said: 'Because the first man is full of harmful humors and vapor and cannot be cured. The other man, who is exhausted, can easily be saved with some fresh air.' Then the king said: 'I shall call together my noblemen and counselors so that they may see your wisdom and skill and you will win honor in their sight.' The doctor said to him: 'No, do that by no means.'

You know your people are jealous of honor. If they cannot persecute a man with their actions, they destroy him with talk. Wait and I will make my wisdom known to you alone in private. This is how I have been taught. I have learned to display more wisdom in private than in public. I do not seek to win glory in your land of darkness, but I glory in the light of my fatherland. Besides, the healing time will not come until the south wind begins to blow and the sun appears at the meridian.' The king to him: 'How can that happen in my country? The sun rarely rises here, since we are beyond the climates, and the north wind always prevails among us. What good to me is your wisdom or such a long delay for healing? I see that you are full of talk.' The doctor answered: 'The wise man must not be hasty. However, in order that I may not seem to you to be unreliable and unfriendly, let me take charge of these two men. I will take them to the borders of your kingdom where the air is more suitable, and then you will see how much actions are worth and how much talk is worth.'

The king said to him: 'We are occupied with greater and more useful matters. Why do you distract us? Or what benefit does your teaching confer on us? We have our delight in present goods, in the things we see and own. We do not aspire to future and uncertain rewards. But, take the men, as you request. If you manage to show us something great and

wonderful through them, we ourselves will proclaim you glorious and have you proclaimed glorious.' So he took the men and led them off to a temperate clime. One of them passed away and died, but the other, refreshed by the gentle air, recuperated.

I am that doctor who sent my words to the world in my longing to cure souls. Although I see the infirmities of many people, I only showed you two through whom you might admire my justice and mercy. I showed you one person whom the devil secretly possessed and who was to receive an eternal punishment. However, to people his works seemed to be righteous and were praised as such. I showed you a second person whom the devil openly controlled, but whom I said was to be healed in his time, although not in away open for men to see, as you were thinking. It was divine justice that the evil spirit began to control him by degrees, but the same justice also demanded that it should leave him by degrees, as in fact it did leave him up until the soul had been released from the body. Then the devil accompanied the soul to her judgment.

The judge said to him: 'You have chastised and sifted her like wheat. Now it belongs to me to crown her with a double crown because of her confession. Go away from the soul whom you chastised for so long.' And he said: 'Come, happy soul, perceive my glory and joy with the senses of your spirit!' To the other soul he said: 'Since you did not have the true faith and yet were honored and praised as being one of the faithful, and since you did not have the perfect deeds of the righteous, you will not have the wages of the faithful. During your lifetime you wondered why I would die for you and why I humbled myself for you.

Now I answer you that the faith of the holy church is true and leads souls upward, while my passion and blood allows them to enter heaven. Therefore, your faithlessness and your false love will press you down into nothingness, and you will be nothing with respect to eternal spiritual goods. As to why the devil did not go out of that other man in the sight of everyone, I answer: 'This world is like a lowly hovel compared to the tabernacle that God inhabits, and the people provoke God to anger. This is why he went out by degrees just as he had entered him.' "

The Virgin's words to the bride that show in an allegory how God the Father chose her from among the saints to be his mother and the port of salvation.

Chapter 32

The Mother speaks to the bride saying: "A certain person searching for precious stones came upon a magnet. He took it in his hand and kept it in his treasury. With its help he led his ship to a safe port. Likewise, my Son searched among the many precious stones that are the saints, but he chose me especially as his mother in order that by my help humanity might be led to the port of heaven. As a magnet attracts iron to itself, so too I attract hard hearts to God. This is why you should not be troubled if your heart sometimes feels hard, because this is for your greater reward."

The Son's words to the bride showing through the example of two men how he judges by the interior and not by the exterior.

Chapter 33

The Son of God speaks to the bride: "You are wondering about two men, one of whom was like a square-set stone, the other like a pilgrim to Jerusalem. However, neither of them achieved what you expected. The first man to whom you were sent was like a square-set stone, firm in his convictions but, like Thomas, piously doubting. Accordingly, since it was not yet the time when wicked deeds were fulfilled, he tasted the wine but did not drink it. Regarding the second man, I said that he would be a fellow traveler to Jerusalem. This happened so that you might learn the true state of the man who was reputed to be righteous and holy. He is a religious in his habit and a monk in his profession but an apostate in his ways, a priest by his rank but a slave to sin, a pilgrim by reputation but a vagabond in intention, rumored to be bound for Jerusalem but really

headed for Babylon. Moreover, he left in disobedience and against the apostolic rules.

Also, he is so infected with heresy that he believes and says that he will become pope in the future and bring about a complete restoration. His books give evidence of this as well. This is why he will die a sudden death and, if he does not beware, he will join the company of the father of lies. Thus, you should not be troubled if certain things are said in an obscure way or if predictions do not turn out as you expect, since God's words can be understood in various ways. Whenever this happens I will point out the truth. But I am God, the true pilgrim bound for Jerusalem. I myself will be your fellow traveler.”

EXPLANATION

The Spirit of God speaks: ”You have heard that the man I told you was like a square-set stone and a pious doubter has died. May you know that he will not be in the number of those who tempted God in the desert nor with those who sought a sign like that of the prophet Jonah, nor with those who stirred up persecution against me. No, he will be with those who had zeal and charity although not yet perfectly.”

The Mother's words to her daughter symbolizing the soul by a ring and the body by a cloth, and about how the soul should be purified through discretion and the body should be cleansed but not killed by abstinence.

Chapter 34

The Mother speaks: ”A ring is given to someone but it is too tight for his finger. So he asks advice of an enemy as to what should be done. The enemy answers him: 'Cut the finger off so the ring will fit on it.' A friend says to him: 'Certainly not! Instead, make the ring wider with a hammer.' Someone wants to filter and strain a drink for a powerful lord by using an unclean cloth and asks advice of an enemy. He answers: 'Cut everything

that is unclean from the cloth and use the clean parts you find to filter your lord's drink.'

A friend tells him: 'By no means do that! Instead, the cloth should be washed and cleansed first and then the drink should be filtered!' The same thing applies even in spiritual matters. The ring represents the soul, the cloth represents the body. The soul, which should be placed on God's finger, should be made wider with the hammer of discretion and purification. The body should not be killed but cleansed through abstinence so that the words of God can be spread abroad by means of it."

Book 4

John the Evangelist's words to the bride about how no good deed goes unrewarded, and about how the Bible excels all other writings, and about the king - robber, traitor, prodigal, and so forth, and about St. John's advice to the king, and about how he should scorn riches and honors for the sake of God.

Chapter 1

A male person appeared to the bride. His hair seemed as if shorn with reproach; his body was drenched in oil and completely naked, though he was in no way ashamed. He said to the bride: "The scripture, which you call holy, says that no good deed will go unrewarded. This is the scripture that is known for you as the Bible but which, for us, is as bright as the sun, incomparably more splendid than gold, bearing fruit like the seed that produces fruit a hundredfold. Just as gold excels other metals, so the scripture, which you say is Holy though we call it Golden, excels all other books, because in it the true God is glorified and announced, the deeds of the patriarchs are unfolded, the inspirations of the prophets are explained.

Since, therefore, no good deed goes unrewarded, hear what I say: This king is a robber in God's sight and a traitor of souls and a prodigal squanderer of riches. As no traitor is worse than the one that betrays someone who loves him, so this king has in a spiritual sense betrayed many people by, in a bodily sense, approving the unjust, unjustly exalting the impious, oppressing the just, ignoring transgressions that should be corrected. Again, no thief is worse than he who betrays someone who lays his head upon his bosom. Likewise, the people of this land were, so to speak, in his bosom, but this king has wretchedly plundered them by allowing the property of some to be taken away, by imposing unbearable burdens on others, by ignoring the abuses of still others, by always exercising justice in a remiss way. In the third place, no thief is worse than one who steals from his unwilling master who has entrusted everything to him and given him his keys. Thus this king was given the keys of power

and glory, which he has used in an unjust and wasteful manner, not for the glory of God. However, seeing that he has given up some of the things he likes out of love for me, I have three counsels for him.

The first is that he should be like the man in the gospel who left the pods of the swine and returned to his father. Let this king likewise scorn riches and honors, which are nothing but swine pods compared to eternal goods, and let him return to his Father God with humility and devotion. Second, let him leave the dead to bury the dead, and let him follow the narrow path of the crucified God. Third, let him leave behind the heavy weight of his sins and enter on the path that is narrow at the start but joyful in the end.

And you who see me, know that I am he who fully understood the golden scripture and in my understanding added to it. I was ignominiously stripped bare, but, because I bore it patiently, God has clothed my soul in immortal dress. I was also doused in oil, which is why I now enjoy the oil of everlasting happiness. Because I was made the guardian of the Mother of God, I left the world in the easiest of deaths after her own, and my body is now in a place of the greatest rest and security.”

The bride's amazing and remarkable vision and God's explanation of it. According to the explanation, the baptized are symbolized by an animal, the heathen by a fish, and God's friends by three crowds of people.

Chapter 2

Then there appeared to the bride a balance, as it were, with two scale-pans hanging above the ground. Their tops and chains went up to the clouds, and their rings went into the sky. In the first scale-pan was a fish. Its scales were razor-sharp, its look like that of a basilisk, its mouth like that of a unicorn spouting venom, its ears like the sharpest spears, like sheets of steel. In the other scale-pan was an animal with a hide like flint.

Its huge mouth spouted hot flames. Its eyelids were like the hardest swords. Its hard ears let fly sharp arrows as from a hard, taut bow.

Then there appeared three crowds of people on the earth. The first was small; the second was smaller; the third was the smallest. A voice called to them from heaven saying: "O, friends, I have a violent thirst for the heart of this amazing animal, if only someone would present it to me out of love! I have also a most fervent desire for the blood of the fish, if only someone could be found to bring me it!"

The crowd answered with a single voice as though from the mouth of all: "O our Maker, how shall we present you with the heart of such a great animal, whose hide is harder than flint? If we try to draw near to its mouth, we get burned by the flames of its fire. If we look at its eyes, we get stabbed by the sparks of its arrows. And even if there were any hope of getting the animal, who will be able to catch the fish? Its scales are sharper than the edge of a sword, its eyes blind us, its mouth pours forth its incurable venom into us!"

The voice from heaven answered saying: "O, friends, the animal and the fish seem invincible to you, but it is easy for the Almighty. From heaven I shall supply wisdom and grant strength to anyone looking for a way to fight the animal. I shall give myself in reward to anyone who is prepared to die for me."

The first crowd answered: "O great Father, you are the giver of every good thing. We are your work and shall gladly give you our heart in your honor. All the rest that remains outside our heart we will keep for the sustenance and refreshment of our body. Therefore, since death seems hard to us and our bodily weakness burdensome and our knowledge slight, govern us inwardly and outwardly and receive graciously what we offer you. Reward us with as much and whatever you like."

The second crowd answered: "We acknowledge our weaknesses and are aware of the world's emptiness and fickleness. Therefore, we shall gladly give you our heart and surrender all our will into the hands of

others, for we would rather submit to others than own even the least of worldly goods.”

The third crowd answered: ”Lord, you desire the heart of the animal and thirst for the blood of the fish: We shall gladly give you our heart and we are prepared to die for you. Grant us wisdom, and we shall look for a way to get at the heart of the animal.”

After this came the sound of a voice from heaven saying: ”O, friend, if you want the heart of the animal, make a hole in the middle of your hands with a sharp bore. Then take the eyelids of a whale and attach them to your own eyelids with strong pitch. Take a plate of steel and tie it to your heart, so that the length and breadth of the steel covers your heart. Then close your nostrils and hold your breath in your throat!

Go boldly forth against the raging animal with your mouth shut and holding your breath. When you get up to the animal, use both your hands to lay hold of its ears. Its arrows will not hurt you but will go through the open holes in your hands. Run up to the animal with your mouth shut and, as you approach it, blow on it with all your breath. When you do so, the flames of the animal will not hurt you but will return on the animal itself and burn it. Take especial care with the sword-edges coming out of the animal's eyes. Latch on to them with your own eyes protected by the whale's eyelids. As a result of their powerful connection, either the animal's swords will be deflected or they will go through its heart. Look carefully for the animal's heartbeat and fix the edge of your mighty steel there and pierce the flint of its hide. If the flint breaks, you can be sure that the animal will die and its heart will be mine. For every pound it weighs, I will give a hundred to the laborer. However if it does not break and the animal injures him, I will care for his wounds and revive him if he dies.

If anyone wants to present me with the fish, let him walk to the shore with a net in his hands - one that is made not out of cords but from very precious metal. Let him enter the water but not more than up to the knees, so that the waves do not harm him. He should set his foot on a solid place where there is sand and no mud. He should put out one of his eyes and

hold it toward the fish. Then the sight of the fish, which is like that of a basilisk, will have no effect on him. He should bear a shield of steel on his arm, and then the sting of the snake will not hurt him. Let him then cast his net over the fish with skill and might so that the fish will not be able to cut through it with its razors or break it or escape by any kind of powerful thrust.

When he feels he has the fish, let him hoist his net over above him, and if he holds it for ten hours above the waters, the fish will die. He should carry it then to the shore and inspect it with the eye that he did not put out, using his hands to open it along the backbone where the blood is more plentiful. May he thus present it to his Lord. If the fish should escape or swim to the other shore and harm him with its venom, I will be able to cure the infection. Nor will there be less reward for the blood of the fish than for the heart of the animal.”

God speaks again: ”The meaning of the scales of the balance is as if one were to say: 'Be lenient and patient, wait and have mercy.' It is to see another's wrongdoing and admonish him continually to make him desist from evil. Likewise, I, the God and Creator of all, sometimes sink down like a scale toward people and admonish them, being lenient and testing them with tribulations. Sometimes I rise up in people's minds through my enlightenment, inflaming them and visiting them with special grace. The meaning of the chains of the balance that go up to the clouds is that I, the God of all, uphold everyone, heathen as well as Christian, friends as well as enemies, and enlighten and visit them with my grace, in order to see if there are any who wish to respond to my grace by turning their will and affections away from evil. The animal signifies those who have received holy baptism but, having reached the age of discretion and not imitating the words of the holy gospel, have let their heart and mouth slip away toward earthly things and do not bother about the spiritual life.

The fish signifies heathens adrift on the waves of concupiscence. Their blood, that is, their faith, is slight and their knowledge of God little.

Thus, I desire both the animal's heart and the fish's blood, should there be any persons found who would attempt to present me with them for the

sake of love. The three crowds are my friends: The first are those who make a reasonable use of the world; the second are those who give up what they have in humble obedience; the third are those who are prepared to die for God.”

*A wonderful conversation between God and the bride by way of question and answer.
It concerns the king and his hereditary rights and those of his successors in the kingdom, and also how some territories should be reclaimed by the successors in the kingdom and some not.*

Chapter 3

“O Lord,” said the bride, ”do not get angry at me for asking, but I heard it read out loud that nothing should be unjustly acquired nor should anything unjustly acquired be retained. Now the present king has territory that some people say he holds by right while others deny it. And indeed it is strange that you tolerate in this man what you reproach in others.”

God answered: ”No people were left after the flood except for those who stayed on the ark during it. From these was born a race that went to the east, and among them some who went to Sweden. Another clan went west and from these arose the people who went to Denmark. Now those who first began to cultivate the land that was not surrounded by water did not occupy any territory belonging to the people who lived across the waters or on islands. Rather, they were each content with what they found, as is written of Lot and Abraham. Abraham said, 'If you go to the right, I will keep to the left,' as if to say 'Whatever you appropriate to yourself, this will belong to you and your heirs.' As time went on there came judges and kings who were satisfied with their boundaries and did not occupy the territory of the people who lived on islands or across the water. Rather, each remained within the boundaries and limits of their forefathers.”

She answered: ”What if a part of the kingdom is transferred by way of donation, should not a successor reclaim it?” God: ”In a certain kingdom, crown goods belonging to the king were kept in safe storage for him. The

people, thinking themselves unable to survive without a king, elected one and entrusted to him the crown goods to be guarded and reconsigned to the future king. If the elected king should want to transfer or reduce a part of the crown goods, surely the future king could and should reclaim it, inasmuch as no reduction of the crown goods should take place. The king can neither diminish nor transfer the crown of the kingdom in his day, unless, perhaps, for some prudent reason. What do the crown goods of the kingdom denote if not his royal authority? What is the kingdom if not the people subject to him? What is the king if not mediator and savior of the kingdom and of the people? Accordingly, the savior and defender of the crown should by no means divide or reduce the crown goods to the detriment of a future king.”

The bride answered: ”What if the king is forced by necessity or violence to transfer a part of the crown goods?” God said: ”If two men had a quarrel, and the stronger of them would not make any concession unless a finger of the other man were cut off, to whom would the cut-off finger belong if not to him who had suffered the damage? This is also the case concerning the kingdom. If, due to necessity or captivity, a king should lose part of the kingdom, the future king can certainly reclaim it, for the king is not master of the realm but the helmsman, and necessity does not make a law.”

She answered: ”What if, during his lifetime, a king were to cede part of the crown goods to a lord, and, upon the king's death, that lord and his successors were to retain the concession as though they owned it, should it not be reclaimed?” The Lord: ”That territory should certainly return to its legitimate owner.”

She replied: ”What if a part of the crown goods were mortgaged to someone for debt and then, both after his death and after he had received income from it for many years, it should come into the hands of another person with no right to the land, since it had been neither ceded nor mortgaged to him but had accrued to him by chance, and if he does not want to give it up without being paid, what should be done?” The Lord said: ”If someone held a lump of gold in his hand and said to a bystander:

'This lump is yours, if you like, for so and so many pounds,' then that many pounds should surely be given to him. If land has been lawfully acquired and is held in peaceful ownership, it should be reclaimed with prudence and brought back after calculating the damages. When a king is elected, he is lifted up on a stone seat to be seen by the people. This indicates that he has dominion and possession of the northern parts of the kingdom, and also that the southern parts belong to the kingdom both by hereditary right and by sale and purchase. The king shall accordingly safeguard the land that has been acquired in order not to lose his dominion and or suffer subjugation should he act otherwise."

Again she answered: "O Lord, do not get angry if I ask just one thing more. The present king has two sons and two kingdoms. In one of the kingdoms the king is elected by hereditary right, in the other by popular vote. Now, however, the opposite has been done, inasmuch as the younger son has received the hereditary kingdom, while the older son holds the elective kingdom." God answered: "There were three incongruities in the electors as well as a fourth that they had in plenty: inordinate love, feigned prudence, the flattery of fools, and lack of confidence in God and in the common people.

Hence, their election was against justice, against God, against the good of the nation and against the welfare of the people. Therefore, in order to provide for peace and for the welfare of the people, it is necessary for the older son to receive the hereditary kingdom and for the younger son to come to the elective one. Otherwise, if the earlier actions are not repealed, the kingdom will suffer loss, the people will be afflicted, discord will arise, the sons shall pass their days in sorrow, and their kingdoms will no longer be kingdoms.

Instead it will be as is written: 'The mighty will move from their seats and those that walk upon the earth shall be exalted.'

Hear now: I will give you the example of two kingdoms. In one there is election, in the other hereditary succession. The first kingdom, where there is election, has been ruined and afflicted, because the rightful heir was not elected. This was due to the electors as well as to the greed of the

one who sought the kingdom. Now, God does not punish the son for his father's sins nor does his anger endure forever, but he works and maintains justice both on earth and in heaven. For this reason that kingdom will not return to its previous glory and happy state until the rightful heir appears on either the father's or the mother's side."

God's words to the bride about two spirits, good and bad; and about the remarkable and useful struggle in the mind of a certain lady arising from the inspirations of the good spirit and from the temptations of the evil spirit; and about what choice should be made in these matters.

Chapter 4

God speaks to the bride: "Thoughts and influences are suggested and infused in human hearts by two spirits, that is to say, from the good spirit and from the bad. The good spirit urges people to think on the future goods of heaven and not to love temporal goods. The bad spirit urges them to love what they see, makes light of sin, offers the excuse of weakness, and adduces the example of weak sinners. Let me exemplify how each spirit inflames the heart of that lady known to you. The good spirit tells her the following, suggesting it to her thoughts: 'Riches are a burden, worldly honor is but air, carnal delights but a dream, fleeting joy and all worldly things are emptiness, the future judgment is inevitable and the inquisitor very harsh. It is too hard, then, it seems to me, to have to give a strict account of fleeting wealth, to win spiritual disgrace for the sake of air, to endure long-lasting hardship for momentary delight, and to render a reckoning to him to whom all things are known before they happen. For this reason, it is safer to give up much in order to make the account smaller rather than to get attached to much and then have to account for much.'

To counter this, the bad spirit replies with these inspirations: 'Dismiss such thoughts, since God is mild and easily placated. Own things boldly, give liberally of your possessions. You were born to have wealth. It has been granted to you so that you may win praise and can give to those who ask of you. If you give up your wealth, you will become a servant to your

servants. You will lose honor and gain scorn, for a poor person finds no comfort. It will be hard for you to adjust to new habits, to tame the flesh in strange ways, and to live without being waited upon. So stay where you are with the honor you have received, and maintain your regal position. Manage your household in praiseworthy fashion so that you will not be accused of inconstancy should you change your state. Continue as you began, and you will be glorious before God and men.”

The good spirit again speaks to the woman's mind and advises her:

'I know two things to be eternal - heaven and hell. No one who loves God above all things will enter into hell. Those who do not love God will not gain heaven. The incarnate God himself trod the path to heaven and confirmed it with signs and by his death. How glorious it is to be in heaven, how bitter is the malice of the devil, and how empty are the things of the earth! His Mother and all the saints imitated God: they preferred to endure every punishment and lose everything - they even despised their very selves - so as not to lose heavenly and eternal possessions. Consequently, it is safer to surrender honor and wealth in due season than to hold on to them until the end. Otherwise, the memory of sins might perhaps fade away as the pain of old age increases, and those who care nothing about my salvation will carry off what I have gathered.'

The evil influence answered to the contrary: 'Leave off thinking on these things. We are weak human beings, but Christ was both God and man. We ought not compare our deeds to those of the saints who had more grace and intimacy with God. Let it be enough for us to hope for heaven and to live as befits our weakness, redeeming our sins through almsgiving and prayers. It is foolish and childish to take up unaccustomed practices and not be able to carry them through to the end.'

The good influence answered: 'I am unworthy to be compared with saints. Nevertheless, it is quite safe to aim at perfection by degrees. What is to hinder me taking up unaccustomed practices? God is able to help me. It often happens that some poor man follows in the path of a mighty and wealthy nobleman. Although the nobleman reaches the inn sooner and enjoys a delicious meal and rests on a soft bed, yet the poor man reaches

the same inn, though later, and there he partakes of the leftovers from the nobleman's meal. If he had not followed in the nobleman's path and sought the same inn, he would not have enjoyed his nobleman's meal.

In the same way I say now that, although I am unworthy to be compared with saints, I do wish to follow along their path, so that at least I might be able to partake of their merits. I am concerned about two things in my soul.

The first is that, if I stay in my homeland, pride might get the better of me. The love of my parents, who request my help, makes me downcast in my mind; the abundance of servants and clothing is a burden to me. The thought of coming down from my proud throne and humbling my body by going on a pilgrimage is more attractive and consoling to me than remaining in a state of honor and accumulating sin upon sin. Second, I am concerned about the poverty of the people and their cries of discontent. Instead of helping them, my presence is a daily burden. That is why I need good advice.'

The bad influence answered: 'Going on pilgrimage is characteristic of an inconstant mind. Mercy is more acceptable than sacrifice. If you leave your homeland, greedy men, having heard of your reputation, will despoil you and carry you off. Then, instead of freedom, you will experience captivity; instead of wealth, poverty; instead of honor, shame; instead of quiet, tribulation.' The good spirit answered with an inspiration: 'I have heard of a certain captive in a tower who found greater comfort in captivity and darkness than he had ever before while living in abundance and temporal comfort. If it should please God to afflict me, it will be in order to increase my merit. After all, he is gentle in encouragement and quick to send help, especially as I am leaving my homeland because of my sins and in order to gain the love of God.'

The bad influence answered in turn: 'What will happen if you should be unworthy of divine consolation and impatient about poverty and humility? Then you will regret having taken such rigorous discipline upon yourself. Then you will have a staff in your hand instead of a ring, a cloth on your head instead of a crown, and lowly sackcloth instead of a crimson

gown.' The good spirit answered in turn: 'I have heard that Holy Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary, having been raised in luxury and nobly married, endured great poverty and abasement. She obtained from God greater comfort in poverty and a more sublime crown than if she had remained in all worldly honor and comfort.'

The bad inspiration answered: 'What will you do if God delivers you into the hands of men and your body is violated? How will your sense of modesty allow you to endure? Will you not sorrow over your own stubbornness and be inconsolable then? Will it not scandalize your whole family and cause them to mourn? Feelings of impatience, anxiety, and thanklessness toward God will surely surge up in your heart. You will want to end your days! And how will you dare to show yourself when you have been defamed in everyone's mouth?' In turn the good thought answered: 'I have heard it read that the holy virgin Lucy, when she was led off to a brothel, remained steadfast in faith and trusted in the goodness of God, saying: 'However much my body may suffer, I am still a virgin and shall receive a twofold crown.' Seeing her faith, God preserved her unharmed. Thus I say: God, who permits no one to be tempted beyond their power, shall protect my spirit, faith, and my will. I entrust myself wholly to him. May his will toward me be done!'

Accordingly, since this lady is shaken by such thoughts, I offer her three counsels. First, that she should recall the honor for which she has been chosen; second, what love God has shown her in her marriage; third, how benevolently she has been spared in this mortal life. I also give her three warnings. First, that she will render an account to God for all her temporal goods down to how the least obol was earned and spent; second, that her time is very short and she will die before she knows it; third, that God does not show the lady of the house more leniency than the maidservant.

Therefore, I advise her to do three things. First, to repent of her sins, to make amendment after a fruitful confession, and to love God with her whole heart. Second, I advise her wisely to seek to avoid the pains of purgatory. Just as a person who does not wholeheartedly love God

deserves a great punishment, so too someone who does not atone for his or her sins while it is possible deserves purgatory. Third, I advise her for a time to leave her bodily friends for God's sake and to come to a place where there is a shortcut between heaven and death in order to avoid the pains of purgatory, because indulgences are obtained there that offer souls advancement and redemption, which have been granted by the holy pontiffs and earned by the blood of God's saints."

The words of St. Peter to the bride about how he desired the salvation of peoples; and his advice to her about obtaining remembrance, and about the great miracles that are yet to be fulfilled in the city of Rome.

Chapter 5

St. Peter speaks to the bride of Christ: "My daughter, you compared me to a plow, which makes wide furrows and clears away roots. This was indeed true. I was so zealous against sin and so aflame for virtue that I was ready to spare neither life itself nor any effort in order to convert the whole world to God. God was so sweet for me in thought, so sweet in conversation, so sweet in action that all things became bitter for me to think about apart from God. Yet God, too, was bitter to me, not because of him, but because of me. How bitterly I wept as often as I thought about how I had offended and denied him, for I had learned by then what it meant to love perfectly, and my tears became as sweet to me as sweet-tasting food.

As to your request for a spirit of remembrance, I answer you: Have you not heard how forgetful I was? I may have been fully taught as to the way of God and had sworn an oath to stand and die with God, but I denied the truth when I was questioned by a woman. And why? Because God had left me to myself, and because I did not know myself. But then what did I do? Then I really did consider what I was - nothing in myself. Then I got up and ran toward the truth, toward God, and he impressed such a

remembrance of his name on my heart that I could never forget him again either in the face of tyrants or of torture or of death.

So do the same thing yourself: Turn in humility to the teacher of remembrance and ask remembrance of him. He is the only one who can do all things. Yet I will help you so that you may be made a participant of the seed that I planted on earth.

Moreover, I will tell you: Rome was once a city of fighters, and her streets were paved in gold and silver. Now, however, her gemstones have turned into mud, her inhabitants are but few; their right eye has been plucked out, and their right hand cut off; toads and vipers dwell with them, and for fear of their venom tame animals dare not appear, nor do my fish lift their heads. Yet fish shall gather in her, though not as many as before; still they will be as sweet and as daring - so much so that, through their cooperation, the toads and frogs will climb down, the snakes will be changed into lambs, and lions will be like doves at their windows."

Again he added: "I tell you further that you will live to hear the words: 'Long live the vicar of Peter!' And you will see him with your own eyes, for I will cause the mountain of delights to fall and those sitting on it will come down from it. Those who refuse to come down willingly will be forced down against everyone's expectations, for God wants to be exalted with mercy and truth."

St. Paul tells the bride the noble story about how he was called by God through the prayers of Blessed Stephen, and about how the wolf became a lamb, and about how it is good to pray for everyone.

Chapter 6

St. Paul speaks to the bride of Christ, saying: "My daughter, you compared me to a lion that was raised among wolves but was rescued from them in a wonderful way. I was indeed a greedy wolf, my daughter, but

God made a lamb out of the wolf for two reasons. The first was because of his great love, for he makes the vessels of his grace out of unworthy materials, and he makes friends out of sinners. The second was because of the prayers of St. Stephen, the first martyr.

Let me describe how I was and what I had in mind at Stephen's stoning and why I deserved his prayers. I neither rejoiced nor delighted in St. Stephen's sufferings, nor did I envy his glory. Still I wanted him to die because, to my mind, I did not see him as having the true faith. When I saw his immense zeal and his patient endurance of suffering, I grieved terribly over his lack of faith - when in fact he was the truly faithful one and I altogether blind and faithless. Out of compassion for him I prayed and begged with my whole heart that his bitter sufferings might bring him to glory and reward.

Because of this, his prayers benefited me first of all, for, through them, I was rescued from the many wolves and made into a gentle lamb. This is why it is good to pray for everyone, because the prayer of the righteous benefits those who are closer and better prepared to receive grace. However, I now complain that this man who spoke so eloquently among the learned and was so patient before those who stoned him has been wholly forgotten in the hearts of many people and especially neglected by those who ought to serve him night and day. They bring him their broken and empty vessels, dirty and disgusting. Therefore, as it is written, they shall be clothed 'in double confusion and shame' and shall be thrown out of the houses of pleasure."

A wonderful and remarkable vision about a soul who is to be judged and about the devil's accusations and the glorious Virgin's intervention. The explanation of this vision denotes heaven by a palace, Christ by the sun, the Virgin by a woman, the devil by an Ethiopian, the angel by a knight. It mentions two irremediable places of punishment and a third, a remediable one, as well as many other wonderful things, suffrages in particular.

Chapter 7

A person who was keeping vigil in prayer and was not asleep had a spiritual vision. It was as though she saw an unfathomably vast palace where there were countless figures dressed in white and shining clothes, each of whom seemed to have his or her own seat. In the principal part of the palace there was a judgment seat on which the sun seemed to sit. The rays that came from the sun were unfathomably long, deep, and wide. Next to this seat stood a maiden with a precious crown on her head, and all the servants of the sun that sat on the seat praised him with hymns and songs.

There appeared then an Ethiopian, terrible in aspect and bearing, as though full of envy and burning with great anger. He cried out and said: "O, just judge, render judgment on this soul for me and hear his works! Little remains of his life. Allow me to punish the body along with the soul until their separation from each other." After he had said this, it seemed to me that there stood near the seat one like a knight in arms, pure and wise in his words and modest in his bearing. He said: "O, judge, see, here are the good works that he has done up to this hour."

The voice of the sun seated on the seat was immediately heard: "There is more vice than virtue here, and it is not just that vice should be joined to the summit of virtue." The Ethiopian answered: "Then it is just for this soul to be joined to me, for while he has some vice in himself, there is total wickedness in me." The knight answered: "God's mercy accompanies every person until death, until the very last moment, and then comes the judgment. Soul and body are still joined together in the man of whom we speak and he still has the power of discernment.

The Ethiopian answered: "Scripture, which cannot lie, says: 'You shall love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself.' Look how this man did all his works from fear and not from love, as he ought. You will find that all the sins he confessed were confessed with little contrition. So he deserves hell, because he failed to deserve the kingdom of heaven. Thus his sins are made known here in the presence of divine justice, because he has never until now felt any contrition due to divine love for the sins he

has committed." The knight answered: "He surely hoped to have true contrition and believed he would have it before death."

The Ethiopian replied: "You have collected every good deed he has ever done, and you know all his words and thoughts for the salvation of his soul. The whole lot of them cannot be compared to the grace of contrition arising from divine love along with holy faith and hope, and they can hardly obliterate his sins. God's eternal justice ordains that no sinner may enter heaven without perfect contrition. It is therefore impossible that God should render a judgment against his eternally foreknown ordinance. This soul is therefore to be sentenced to hell and joined to me for eternal punishment." On these words the knight fell silent and gave no answer.

Then countless demons appeared, flying off like sparks from a hot fire and crying out with one voice. To him who sat like the sun on the judgment seat they said: "We know that you are one God in three Persons without beginning or end. There is no other god than you. You are love itself along with mercy and justice. You existed in yourself from the beginning without loss or change, as is proper to God. Outside of you is nothing, and nothing outside of you has any joy. Your love created the angels from no other matter than from your divine power. You acted as mercy dictated. However, when we became inflamed with inner pride, envy, and greed, your justice-loving charity cast us together with our burning malice out of heaven into the unfathomable and shadowy abyss that is now called hell. This is what your charity did then. Your charity even now cannot be separated from justice in your judgments, whether it is fulfilled according to mercy or according to equity. We will go even further: If the one whom you love more than anyone, I mean, if the sinless Virgin who begot you had sinned mortally and had died without godly contrition, your love for justice is such that her soul would never have reached heaven but would have been with us in hell. So, Judge, why do you not sentence this soul to us, so that we may punish him according to his works?"

After this a trumpet-like sound was heard at which those who heard it fell silent, and immediately a voice spoke and said: "Be silent, all of you

angels and souls and demons, and hear what God's Mother has to say!" Then the Virgin herself appeared before the judgment seat, and it looked as though she were hiding some large objects beneath her mantle. She said: "You, enemies! You attack mercy, and you love justice but without charity. Though these good works of this soul may be deficient and, for that reason, he should not enter heaven, yet look what I have beneath my mantle!" Then the Virgin opened the folds of her mantle on either side. On the one side could be seen a little church, as it were, with monks in it. On the other side appeared men and women, God's friends, both religious and others, all of them crying out with one voice and saying: "Have mercy, merciful Lord!"

There was silence then, and the Virgin spoke, saying: "Scripture says: A person with perfect faith can move the world's mountains by means of it. What about the voices of those who both have faith and have served God with burning love? What can and should these be able to accomplish? What will those friends of God do whom this man, seeking only the reward of heaven for his good works, has asked to pray for him in order that he might be saved from hell and reach heaven? Are not all their tears and prayers able to snatch him and raise him up so that he can obtain God's love and contrition before his death? Besides, I will also join my own pleas to the prayers of all those saints in heaven whom he especially honored."

Then she added: "O demons, by the power of the judge I order you to attend to what you in justice now see." Then all of them answered as with one voice: "We see that in the world a little water and a lot of air placate the wrath of God. So, too, by your prayer God is placated and inclined toward mercy and charity." Then the sun's voice was heard to say: "Thanks to the prayers of my friends, this man will yet receive enough godly contrition before death so as not to go to hell, but he will be purged among those who have the heaviest punishment in purgatory. Once his soul has been purged, he will receive a reward in heaven in the company of those who had faith and hope but only small charity on earth." Once this had been said, the demons fled.

Then it seemed as though a terrible and dark place was opened up before the bride. In it there appeared a burning furnace. The fire burned on no other fuel than demons and living souls. Above the furnace appeared the soul whose sentence was mentioned earlier. Its feet were affixed to the furnace, and it stood upright like a man. The soul stood neither on the uppermost part of the furnace nor the lowest but, as it were, on one side of it. The shape of the furnace was terrible and awesome. Its fire seemed to push upward through the bottom of the soul's feet, as when water pushes itself upward through pipes, and it went up over his head with such violent pressure that the soul's pores were like veins coursing with hot fire. His ears looked like a blacksmith's bellows that continuously fanned the whole brain with their flapping. His eyes looked like they were inside out, sunken all the way in and attached to the back of his head. His mouth was open, and his tongue was pulled out through his nostrils and was hanging down to his lips. His teeth were like iron nails attached to his gums. His arms were so long that they reached down to the feet. Both hands seemed to be holding and squeezing a greasy, tar-like thing that was on fire. The skin that covered the soul looked like an animal hide just hanging over his body, and he was dressed in a cloth that was like a sheet drenched with sperm. This cloth was so icy cold that anyone who saw it shivered. Pus oozed out of it as from a wound with putrid blood. A stench came from it that was so bad that it could not be compared to the worst stench in the world.

After the sight of this torment, the soul's voice was heard to cry out woe five times, weeping with all his might. He said: "Woe is me, first of all, because I loved God so little in return for his great virtues and for the grace given me. Woe is me, second, because I did not fear God's justice as I should have. Woe is me, third, because I loved the pleasure of my sinful body and flesh. Woe is me, fourth, for all my worldly riches and pride. Woe is me, fifth, that I ever laid eyes on you, Louis and Johanna!"

Then an angel said to me: "Let me explain this vision for you. The palace you saw is an image of heaven. The great crowd of those who were seated and dressed in white and shining clothes are the angels and the souls of the saints. The sun signifies Christ in his divine nature; the woman

stands for the Virgin who gave birth to God; the Ethiopian accusing the soul is the devil; the knight reporting the good works of the soul is an angel. The furnace denotes hell. Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause.

Know, too, that the fire that you saw in the furnace burns in eternal darkness, and the souls burning in it do not all have the same punishment. The darkness that appeared around the furnace is called limbo. It comes from the darkness that is in the furnace. Yet both make up one place and one hell. Anyone entering it will never dwell with God.

Above the darkness is found the greatest punishment of purgatory sustainable by souls. Beyond this lies another place of lesser punishment, where there is only a weakened condition as to fortitude, beauty, and the like. It is like when people have been sick, and once the sickness and pain are gone, they have nothing left of their strength until they gradually recover it.

Beyond that is a third place where there is only the punishment of the longing for God. To help your mind understand it better, I will offer you a comparison. It is as when copper is mixed with gold, and the two are melted together in a very hot fire so long as necessary to purge it until the copper is consumed and only pure gold is left. The stronger and thicker the copper is, the hotter the fire must be, until the gold flows like water and is all on fire. The master then takes the gold to another place where it obtains its true form to be seen and touched. Afterward he puts it in a third place where it is stored to be presented to the owner.

This is also the case in spiritual matters. The greatest punishment of purgatory is in the first level above the darkness where you saw the aforesaid soul being purged. The demons can touch it there; poisonous vermin and wild beasts are symbolically present there. There is heat and cold, darkness and confusion, all coming from the punishment of hell.

Some souls are punished less there, some more, according as sins were atoned for or not while the soul remained in the body.

The master, that is, God's justice, then carries the gold, that is, the souls, to other places where they only suffer from a lack of strength. There they dwell as long as necessary until they attain relief either from their own special friends or from the continuous works of the Holy Church. The more help a soul gets from her friends, the quicker she convalesces and is released from that place. After this a soul is brought to the third place where there is no other punishment but the longing to enter God's presence and behold him in blessedness. Many souls dwell there for a very long time, except for those who had a perfect longing to enter God's presence and behold him while they still lived in the world.

Know, too, that many people die in the world who are so just and innocent that they enter right away into the presence and vision of God. There are also those who have made so much atonement for their sins with their good works that their souls shall know no punishment. However, there are few who do not come to the place of longing for God. Hence all the souls dwelling in these three places participate in the prayers of the Holy Church and in the good works done in the world, especially in those that they did in their lifetimes and in those that are done by their friends after their death.

Know also that, just as sins are of many different kinds and forms, so too the punishments are of many and different kinds. Hence, just as a hungry man rejoices over a morsel of food that reaches his mouth, a thirsty man over a drink, a sad man is gladdened by joy, a naked one by clothing, a sick one on coming into bed, so souls rejoice and participate in those goods that are done for them in the world." The angel added: "Blessed be the person in the world who helps souls with prayers and good deeds and physical labor. God's justice, which cannot lie, declares that souls must either be purged after death through the punishment of purgatory or released ahead of time through the good works of friends."

After this many voices were heard from purgatory, saying: "O, Lord Jesus Christ, just judge, send your love to those who have spiritual power in the world, and then we will be able to participate more than now in their chants, readings, and offerings."

Above the space from which their cries were heard there seemed to appear a house in which many voices were heard, saying: "May God reward those who send us help in our weakness!" It seemed that the rays of dawn appeared in this house, and beneath the rays a cloud appeared that had nothing of the light of dawn, and from it came a great voice saying: "O Lord God, through your unfathomable power grant hundredfold wages to each of those in the world who with their good works raise us up to the light of your divinity and the vision of your face!"

The angel's words to the bride about the meaning of the punishment of a man's soul judged by God in the above chapter; and also about the lessening of the punishment because he had spared his enemies before death.

Chapter 8

The angel said: "The soul whose predicament you saw and whose sentence you heard finds himself in the most severe punishment of purgatory. This consists in his not knowing whether he will come to rest after purgation or whether he has been condemned. This is God's justice, because this man possessed great knowledge and discernment, but he used them in a material way for worldly ends and not in a spiritual way for the sake of his soul, for he forgot and neglected God altogether while he lived.

Now his soul suffers from the burning fire and shivers from the cold. He is blind in the darkness, fearful of the horrible sight of demons, deaf from the devil's howling, hungry and thirsty within himself, and clothed in shame on the outside. Yet God granted him one grace after death, namely, that of not coming into contact with the demons. This was because he had

shown leniency to his chief enemies for the sole sake of God's honor. He pardoned their grave offences and made friendship with his chief enemy.

Know, too, that, in accordance with God's just decision, whatever good he did, whatever he pledged and donated of his legitimate wealth diminishes and relieves his pain, especially with the aid of the prayers of God's friends. Any other, less legitimately acquired possessions that he gave away benefit their previous, legitimate owners, either in a spiritual or bodily way, provided they are worthy of it according to God's dispensation."

The angel's words to the bride about the judgment of God's justice against the above mentioned soul, and about the satisfaction to be made in this life for this soul while in purgatory.

Chapter 9

The angel speaks again: "You heard before that, through God's love and thanks to the prayers of God's friends, this man received contrition for his sins a short while before death, and that this contrition saved him from hell. Accordingly, God's justice decided that he should burn for six ages in purgatory after death, unless he obtains help from God's friends in the world. These ages represent those that he lived from the first hour in which he knowingly committed a mortal sin until the time when he achieved fruitful repentance through God's love.

The first age means that he did not love God for the death of Christ's noble body and the many sufferings Christ endured for nothing other than the salvation of souls. The second age means that he did not love his own soul, as a Christian ought, and did not return thanks to God for his baptism and because he was not a Jew or a pagan. The third age means that he knew well enough what God commanded him to do but had little desire to carry it out. The fourth age means that he knew well enough what God had forbidden to those wanting to reach heaven but that he dared to go against

it, following not the motions of his conscience but rather his passions and desires. The fifth age means that he did not make proper use of the means of grace and of confession, although he had plenty of time. The sixth age means that he cared little about the body of Christ and did not wish to receive it frequently, since he did not want to refrain from sin, nor did he possess enough divine charity to receive the body of Christ until the end of his life.”

Then a man of very modest appearance appeared. His clothes were white and shining like a priestly alb; he was girded with a linen belt and a red stole about his neck and under his arms. He commenced speaking in this way: ”You who see this, pay close attention and commit to memory what you see and hear. You and all who live in the world cannot understand God's power and what he established before time in the same way as we can who are with him. All those things that take place in an instant for God are incomprehensible to you except by means of words and images after a worldly fashion.

I am one of those whom this man, now condemned to purgatory, honored with his gifts in his life. For this reason God has graciously granted me that if anyone will do what I advise, then this man's soul will be transferred to a higher place where he will obtain his true form and know no pain other than such as a person would suffer after having had a great illness once all the pain has gone away, lying there like someone without any strength, yet full of joy in the certain knowledge that he would survive.

As you heard, the soul of this man cried out its woe five times. Therefore I have five consoling things to tell him. His first woe was that he had loved God little. In order to free him from this, let thirty chalices in which God's blood is offered up be donated for his soul so that God himself might be more honored. His second woe was that he had not had any fear of God. To release him from this, let thirty priests be chosen, who are deemed to be pious, each of whom should say thirty masses whenever he can: nine masses of martyrs, nine of confessors, nine of all saints; the twenty-eighth mass is to be that of angels, the twenty-ninth that of Holy

Mary, the thirtieth that of the Blessed Trinity. They should all have the intention of praying for his soul, so that God's anger may be appeased and his justice turned toward mercy.

His third woe was because of his pride and greed. To release him from this, one must invite thirty paupers and humbly wash their feet and give them food, money, and clothing to comfort them. Both the person who washes and those who get washed shall humbly beseech God, for the sake of his humility and his bitter passion, to pardon this man's soul for the greed and pride of which he was guilty. His fourth woe was carnal lust. If, then, someone should help both a virgin and a widow to enter into the convent and should, moreover, provide for a girl to join in true wedlock, giving them all enough property to allow them to eat and dress sufficiently, then God will pardon the sins this man committed in the flesh, inasmuch as these are the three ways of life commanded and chosen by God to be states of life in the world.

His fifth woe was that he had committed many sins that caused harm to a great number of people. In particular, he had made every effort to ensure the marriage of the two persons mentioned earlier, who were as closely related by blood as if they both came from the same family. Moreover, he procured their union more for his own sake than for the sake of the realm. He did so without asking the pope's permission and against the praiseworthy ordinances of the Holy Church. Many a person has become a martyr because he would not tolerate such deeds being done against God and his Holy Church and against Christian morality.

If anyone wishes to make reparation for so great a sin, he should go to the pope and say: 'A certain man committed such and such a sin,' without naming the person explicitly, 'but in the end he repented and obtained absolution though without atoning for the sin. Therefore, impose on me whatever penance you want that I can endure, for I am ready to atone for that sin on his account.' Truly, even if no greater penance should be imposed on him than an 'Our Father,' it will suffice to lessen this soul's punishment in purgatory."

*Christ's complaint to the bride about the Romans, and about the cruel sentence
Christ hands down against them, should they die in their sins.*

Chapter 10

God's Son speaks these words, saying: "O, Rome, you repay me badly for my many favors. I am God, who created all things, and I manifested my great love through the harsh death of my body, a death I willed to endure for the salvation of souls. Three are the paths on which I wished to come to you, and truly you wished to betray me on all of them. You hung a large rock overhead to crush me on the first path. You placed a sharp spear on the second path to block my way to you. You dug a moat in the third path for me to fall into unawares and drown. What I have said now should not be understood in a physical but a spiritual sense. I am speaking to the inhabitants of Rome who act in this way but not to my friends who reject their works.

The first path by which I am accustomed to enter the human heart is the fear of God. They have hung over it an enormous rock, that is, the great presumption of a hardened heart that does not fear the judge whom none can withstand. They say in their hearts: 'Should the fear of God come to me, the presumption of my heart shall crush it.' The second path by which I come is the inspiration of divine counsel, which often also comes through preaching and teaching. People block me from this path with a spear through their delight in sinning against my precepts and through their firm resolution to persevere in wickedness until they can no longer keep it up. This is the spear that blocks God's grace from coming to them. The third path is the Holy Spirit's enlightenment in each person's heart by which people can understand and ponder the nature and greatness of what I have done for them and what I suffered for them. They dig a deep moat for me by saying in their hearts: 'I love my pleasure more than his charity. I'm satisfied by just thinking about the enjoyments of the present life.' So they drown divine love and all my deeds, as it were, in a deep moat.

The inhabitants of Rome do all this to me, and certainly show it in their words and deeds. They count my words and deeds for nothing, cursing and insulting me and my Mother and my saints both in jest and in earnest, whether happy or angry, instead of giving me thanks. They do not live according to Christian customs, as the Holy Church commands, having no more love for me than the demons. The demons prefer to endure their wretchedness forever and hold on to their own wickedness rather than to see me and join me in perennial glory. These are the people who refuse to receive my body, which is consecrated from the altar bread, as I myself established, and whose reception is a great help against the devil's temptations. How wretched they are who scorn such help while they are still healthy and reject it like poison, because they do not wish to refrain from sin!

I shall now come by a way unknown to them through the power of my divinity, bringing vengeance on the scorers of my humanity. And just as they have prepared three obstacles on their paths to prevent my coming to them, so too I shall prepare three other obstacles for them, the bitterness of which they shall know and taste both dead and alive. My rock is a sudden and unforeseen death that shall crush them so that all their merriments will be left behind, and their souls will be forced to come alone to my judgment. My spear is my justice, and it shall separate them from me so that they will never taste of the one who redeemed them and will never behold the beauty of the one who created them. My moat is the shadowy darkness of hell into which they shall fall, living there in everlasting wretchedness. All my angels in heaven and all the saints shall condemn them, and all the demons and all the souls in hell shall curse them.

Yet I take note of them, and I am saying this about those people with the disposition described above, whether they are religious or secular clergy or laymen or women or their sons and daughters old enough to understand that God forbids every sin, but who nonetheless voluntarily get caught up in sins and shut out God's love and belittle the fear of him.

My will is still the same as it was when I hung upon the cross. I am the same now as I was then, when I forgave the thief his sins upon his asking for mercy and opened for him the gates of heaven. For the other

thief, however, who despised me, I unlocked hell's barriers, and there he remains, forever tormented for his sins.”

St. Agnes's words of praise and blessing to the glorious Virgin herself, and about how she prays to the Virgin for the daughter, and about the answer of the Lord and of his sweet Virgin and their consoling words to the bride, and about this world as symbolized by a pot.

Chapter 11

Agnes speaks: ”O, mother Mary, virgin of virgins, you can rightly be called the dawn lit by the true sun, Jesus Christ. Do I call you dawn because of your royal lineage or wealth or honors? Certainly not. You are rightly called the dawn because of your humility, the light of your faith, and your singular vow of chastity. You are the herald introducing the true sun, you are the joy of the righteous, you are the expulsion of demons, you are the consolation of sinners. For the sake of that wedding that God celebrated in you at the time, I pray that your daughter shall remain in your Son's honor and love.”

God's Mother answers: ”What do you mean by this wedding? Tell me for the sake of her who is listening!” Agnes answers: ”You are truly mother and virgin and bride. The most beautiful wedding was celebrated in you at the time when a human nature was joined to God in you without any admixture or loss in his divinity. Virginity and motherhood were united while virginal modesty remained intact, and you became at the same time both mother and daughter of your Creator. This day you gave birth in time to him who was eternally begotten of the Father and has wrought all things with the Father.

The Holy Spirit, within and without you and all around you, made you fruitful as you gave your consent to God's herald. God's Son himself, who was born of you this day, was within you even before his herald came to you. Have mercy, then, on your daughter!

She is like a poor little woman dwelling in a valley with nothing other than some small living creature, such as a hen or a goose. She had so much affection for the lord living on the mountain of the valley that, out of love, she offered the lord of the mountain whatever living creature she had. The lord answers her: 'I have plenty of everything and have no need of your gifts. But are you perhaps giving a little something in order to receive something greater?' She says to him: 'I am not offering this because you need it but because you have permitted such a poor little woman as myself to live with you on your mountain and because your servants show me respect. Therefore, I give you the little comfort I have so that you know that I would do more, if I could, and that I am not ungrateful for your grace.' The lord answers: 'Since you love me with such charity, I will bring you up to my mountain and give you and yours clothing and food each and every year.' Such is the disposition of your daughter now. She surrendered to you the one living thing she had, that is, the love of the world and of her children. Hence, it is for you to provide for her in your kindness."

In answer the Mother says to the bride of the Son: "Stand firm, daughter. I shall ask my Son, and he will give you food each and every year and place you on the mountain where thousands upon thousands of angels are his servants. Indeed, if you counted all the persons born from Adam up to the last one who will be born at the end of the world, you shall find more than ten angels for each human being. The world, in fact, is no more than a cooking pot. The fire and ashes beneath the pot are the friends of the world, but God's friends are like the choice morsels of food inside the pot. When the table is ready, then the delicious food will be presented to the lord for him to enjoy. But the pot itself will be smashed, though the fire shall not be extinguished."

The Virgin Mother's words to the daughter about the vicissitudes of God's friends in this world, who are at times spiritually distressed and at other times comforted, and about the meaning of spiritual distress and comfort, and about how God's friends must rejoice and be comforted in their time.

Chapter 12

The Mother speaks: "In this world God's friends must sometimes find themselves spiritually distressed, at other times spiritually comforted. Spiritual consolation means the infusion of the Holy Spirit, contemplating God's great works, admiring his forbearance, and putting all this cheerfully into practice. Spiritual distress is when the mind is involuntarily disturbed by unclean and vexing thoughts, when it suffers anguish over dishonor shown to God and over the loss of souls, when one's heart is forced to occupy itself with worldly concerns for a good reason. God's friends can also at times be comforted with a temporal kind of comfort, such as edifying conversation, decent entertainment, or other activities in which there is nothing demeaning or indecent, as you will understand from the following comparison.

If a fist were always held tightly closed, then either the muscles would be strained or the hand would grow weak. It is similar in spiritual matters. If the soul always remained in contemplation, then she would either forget herself and perish through pride, or else her crown of glory would be lessened. The reason why God's friends are at times comforted by the infusion of the Holy Spirit and are at other times, with God's permission, distressed is that their distress tears up the roots of sin and firmly plants the fruit of righteousness.

But God, who sees hearts and understands all things, moderates the temptations of his friends in such a way that the temptations lead to their progress, for he does everything and allows everything to happen with due weight and measure. Since you have been called in God's Spirit, do not worry about God's forbearance, for it is written that no one comes to God unless the Father draws him. A shepherd uses a bunch of flowers to draw his sheep and entice them into the barn, and carefully locks the barn. The sheep, then, cannot get out but run around in circles because the barn is secured by means of walls, a high roof, and locked gates. In this way they get so used to eating hay that they become tame enough to eat hay out of the hand of the shepherd. This very thing has been done with you. That which before seemed unbearable and difficult to you has now become so easy that now nothing delights you so much as God."

Christ's words to the bride as to which tears are acceptable to God and which are not, and about what kind of alms should be requested or given to the poor for the sake of departed souls, and about Christ's advice and exhortation to the bride.

Chapter 13

The Son speaks: "You wonder why I do not listen to that man whom you see shedding many tears and donating a great deal to the poor in my honor.

I answer you in the first place: Where water flows from two springs, it frequently happens when they meet that the cloudy and muddy water of one source pollutes and defiles the purer water of the other spring. And who can drink such muddied water?

It is similar with the tears of many people. Some people's tears arise at times due to the debasement of the inclinations of nature, at other times due to worldly distress and the fear of hell. Such people's tears are muddy and stinking, for they do not come from the love of God. Those tears are sweet to me that arise from considering God's kindnesses as well as one's own sins and from love for God. Tears such as these raise the soul up from earthly things to heaven and bring about her new birth for eternal life. There are two kinds of birth, physical and spiritual. Physical birth means a person is born from impurity to impurity. It bewails physical damage; it gladly puts up with worldly toils. The child of such a birth is not the child of such tears by which eternal life is gained. That other birth begets rather a child of tears and bewails the loss of souls and takes utmost care that its child should not offend God. Such a mother is closer to the child than the one who begets it physically, for blessed life is gained through a birth like this.

Second, in regard to his giving alms to the poor, I answer you: If you bought a cloak for your son with your servant's money, would not the cloak rightly belong to the one who owned the money? Of course it would.

It is similar in spiritual matters. A man who oppresses his subjects or neighbors in order to help the souls of his loved ones with their money rather provokes me to wrath than placates me, because unjustly expropriated possessions benefit their previous legitimate owner and not those persons for whom they are given.

However, because this man has been kind to you, kindness will be done to him, both spiritually and physically - spiritually by the offering of prayers to God for his sake. You cannot believe how much the prayers of the humble please God. I will show you it through a comparison. If someone were to offer a great amount of silver to a king, any bystanders there would say: 'What a great present!' However if the same person were to pray one 'Our Father' for the king, they would laugh at him. It is the opposite with God. If anyone offers one 'Our Father' for another's soul, it is more acceptable to God than a great amount of gold, as could be seen in the case of good Gregory, who raised up even a pagan emperor to a higher station through his prayers.

Again, tell him this: 'Because you have shown me kindness, I pray to God, the rewarder of all, to repay you in his graciousness.' Tell him this as well: 'My dear friend, I give you one counsel and I make one request of you. I counsel you to open the eyes of your heart through the consideration of the instability and vanity of the world. Think about how the love of God has grown cold in your heart and about how heavy the penalty will be and how horrible the future judgment. Attract God's love to your heart by making use of all your time, temporal goods and works, affections, and thoughts for the glory of God, and entrust your sons to God's plan and dispensation without letting your love of God grow any less for their sake. Second, I ask you to pray earnestly to God, who can do all things, that he may grant you patience and fill your heart with his blessed love.'

Christ's comforting words to the bride in her fear, telling her not to be afraid of what she has seen and heard, because it comes from the Holy Spirit, and about the devil as symbolized by a snake and a lion, the consolation of the Holy Spirit as symbolized by a tongue, and about how to resist the devil.

Chapter 14

The Son says: "Why are you afraid and anxious that the devil may insert things into the words of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever heard of anyone who kept his tongue safe and sound by placing it between the teeth of an angry lion? Has anyone ever sucked sweet honey from the tail of a snake? No, never. Now what does the lion or snake symbolize if not the devil - a lion in evil and a snake in cunning? What does the tongue symbolize if not the consolation of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to place one's tongue between the teeth of a lion if not to utter the words of the Holy Spirit - who appeared in the shape of a tongue - in order to gain human favor and praise? Anyone who speaks God's praises for human gratification has surely been bitten and deceived by the devil, because those words, though they come from God, are not coming from a mouth that has the love of God, and so that person's tongue, that is, the consolation of the Holy Spirit, will be taken away from him or her. However, a person who desires nothing but God, and finds all worldly affairs bothersome, whose body does not seek to see or hear anything but what comes from God, whose soul rejoices in the infusion of the Holy Spirit, such a person cannot be deceived, for the evil spirit yields to the good spirit and does not dare to approach it.

What does sucking honey from a snake's tail mean if not waiting for the consolation of the Holy Spirit to come from the suggestions of the devil? That consolation will never come, because the devil would rather let himself be slain a thousand times over than offer any word of consolation to a soul the utterance of which might lead the soul to the meaning of life. Fear not, for God, who began a good work with you, will carry it through to a good end. But know that the devil is like an unleashed dog that comes running to you with his temptations and suggestions when he sees you lacking the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, if you should place a hard object in his way to hurt or paralyze his teeth, he will immediately leap away from you and will not harm you. The hard object placed in the devil's way signifies divine charity and obedience to God's commands. When the devil sees that these virtues are perfect in you, his teeth, that is, his attempts and his intention, will immediately be frustrated, because he

sees that you would suffer anything rather than go against God's commands."

Christ's words to the bride about why the good suffer in this life while the bad prosper; and how God shows her through a parable that he sometimes promises temporal goods but that these should be taken to mean spiritual goods, and about why God has not predicted every single event to happen at particular times, although all times and seasons are known to him.

Chapter 15

The Son of God says: "You are wondering why you have heard that a certain friend of God, who should be honored, is suffering hardships, while, on the other hand, you have heard that a certain enemy of God, who you thought should be whipped, has been honored, as was told you in another divine vision. I answer: My words should be taken in both a spiritual and a bodily sense. What is the suffering of the world if not a kind of preparation and elevation to the crown of reward? And what does worldly prosperity mean for someone who abuses grace if not a kind of descent into perdition? To suffer in the world is truly an ascension to life. But, for the unrighteous, prospering in the world is truly a descent into hell. In order to build up your patience by means of God's word, I will tell you a parable.

Imagine a mother with two sons, one of whom was born in a dark prison, knowing and hearing nothing, only shadows and his mother's milk. The other was born in a small cottage and had human food, a bed to rest on, and the attendance of a maidservant.

The mother said to the one who was born in prison: 'My son, if you leave the darkness, you will have more delicious food, a softer bed, and a safer dwelling.' When the boy heard that, he left. If, however, his mother had promised him loftier things, such as galloping horses or ivory homes or a great household, he would not have believed it, for he had never known anything but shadows and his mother's milk. Similarly, God, too,

sometimes makes a promise of lesser things but means something greater by them in order that people may learn to ponder the things of heaven by means of earthly ones.

But the mother said to the other son: 'My son, what use is it to you to live in this disgusting cottage? Take my advice, and it will be to your advantage. I know two cities: The inhabitants in the first experience endless and indescribable joy and everlasting honor. In the second city, fighters are in training, and everyone who fights is made a king, yet every loser wins.' On hearing that, the boy went out to the stadium, then returned and said to his mother: 'I saw a remarkable game in the stadium: Some people were being knocked down and trampled upon, others were being stripped and bruised, yet all of them kept quiet, all of them were playing, and no one raised his head or hand against those who knocked them down.'

His mother answers: 'The city you saw is only the outskirts of the city of glory. In these outskirts, the Lord wishes to test and see who is fit to enter into the city of glory. He gives a higher crown of glory to all those he has seen to be more vigilant in the contest. This is why there are people residing in the outskirts who make a test of the ones who are to be crowned in glory. You saw the people lying prostrate being stripped and insulted but keeping quiet. This was because our clothes have been defiled by the darkness in our cottage.

A great contest and struggle is necessary in order to wash them thoroughly.' The boy answers: 'It is a tough thing to be trampled down and keep quiet. In my opinion it is better to return to my cottage.' His mother says: 'If you remain in our cottage, vermin and snakes will come out of the shadows, and when you hear them your ears shall tremble, and their bite will freeze the very strength within you, and you will wish never to have been born rather than to live with them.' When the boy heard this, he felt desire for bodily goods, but his mother was thinking of it in a spiritual sense. Thus, he felt more encouraged each day and was spurred on to the crown of reward.

God acts in a similar way. Sometimes he promises and grants bodily or carnal goods, but really intends spiritual goods by them, so as both to spur the mind on in its fervor toward God by means of the gifts received and to keep it humble in its spiritual understanding so that it does not fall into presumption. That is how God treated Israel. First he promised and gave them temporal goods, and also performed miracles for them, so that they might learn about invisible and spiritual goods by means of such things. Then, when their understanding had attained a better knowledge of God, he used obscure and difficult words to speak to them through the prophets, adding at times words of comfort and joy, as, for example, when he promised them a return to the fatherland, perpetual peace, and a restoration of all that was in ruins. Though the people were carnal minded, and understood and desired all these promises in a carnal way, still God in his foreknowledge decided beforehand that some promises would be fulfilled in a physical sense, but others spiritually.

You might ask: Why did not God, to whom all hours and seasons are known, openly foretell that particular events would take place at specific times? And why did he say some things but with other things in mind? I answer you: Israel was carnal and only desired carnal things and could only apprehend the invisible by way of the visible. Therefore, God deigned to teach his people in many different ways, so that believers in God's promises would receive a loftier crown due to their faith, so that students of virtue would become more fervent, so that slackers would become more fervently enkindled toward God, so that wrongdoers would more freely cease their sinning, so that sufferers would bear their trials more patiently, so that those who toiled would persevere more cheerfully, so that the hopeful would receive a loftier crown due to the obscurity of the promise. If God had only promised spiritual goods to the carnal minded, they all would have grown lukewarm in their love for heaven. If he had only promised carnal goods, what difference would there then be between man and beast? Instead, in his kindness and wisdom, in order that they might govern their bodies with justice, with the moderation of those who are about to die, God gave humankind bodily goods. In order that they might desire the things of heaven, he displayed to them heavenly favors and wonders.

In order that they might fear sin, he displayed his terrible judgments and the possessions brought about by the bad angels. In order that they might expect and desire the one who would explain the promises and grant wisdom, obscure and doubtful words were mixed together with words of encouragement.

So too, even today, God reveals spiritual decisions in bodily terms. When he speaks of bodily glory, he means the spiritual kind. This is in order that all teaching authority might be attributed to God alone. What is worldly glory if not wind and toil and the loss of divine consolation? What is suffering if not a preparation in virtue? To promise worldly glory to a righteous soul, what does that mean if not the removal of spiritual comfort? But to promise sufferings in the world, what does that mean if not the medicine and antidote for a great illness? Therefore, my daughter, God's words can be understood in many ways, though this does not imply any mutability in God but simply that his wisdom is to be admired and feared. Just as I expressed many things in bodily terms through the prophets, which were also fulfilled in a bodily fashion, while I expressed other things in bodily terms that came about or were intended in a spiritual sense, so too I do the same thing now. When these things happen, I shall indicate their cause to you."

The Virgin tells the daughter how the devil often cunningly leads one and another of God's servants beneath the veil of devotion in order to cause them distress, and to which people indulgences are granted, and she uses a goose to symbolize how the church is constituted and a hen to symbolize God, and she explains which people deserve to be called God's little chickens.

Chapter 16

God's Mother says to the bride of Christ: "Why did you give hospitality to that man who has a boastful tongue, a strange way of life and worldly customs? She answers: "Because he was thought to be a good man, and I did not want to get into trouble for disdaining a man with a

reputation for talking. However, if I had known beforehand that it was displeasing to God, I would no more have received him than I would have a snake.” The Mother says to her: ”Your goodwill set a guard and a restraint on his tongue and heart, so that he did not cause you any worries. The devil in his cunning brought you a wolf in sheep's clothing in order to create an occasion of causing you distress and spreading talk about you.” She answers: ”He seems devout and penitent to us. He visits the saints and says he wants to keep away from sin.”

The Mother answers: ”If you have a feathered goose, tell me, do you eat the meat or the feathers? Is it not so that the feathers are revolting to the stomach, but the meat provides true food and refreshment? This can be applied spiritually to the arrangement and constitution of the Holy Church. She is like a goose in that she has within her the body of Christ, as it were, the freshest of meat. The sacraments are like the inner parts of the goose. Its wings symbolize the virtues and acts of the martyrs and confessors. Its down represents the charity and patience of the saints, and its feathers indulgences that holy men have granted and gained. People who receive indulgences with the intention of gaining absolution for their previous sins while remaining in their previous vicious habits only get the feathers of the goose. Their souls are neither fed nor refreshed. When they eat the feathers, they just throw up.

However, people who receive indulgences and are minded to flee from sin, to restore goods unjustly taken, to make satisfaction for wounds unjustly inflicted, not to earn a single penny through base profit, not to live a single day except according to God's will, to submit their will to God in fortune and misfortune, and to flee worldly honors and friendships such as these will gain pardon of their sins and be like angels of God in the sight of God.

The people who enjoy the absolution of previous sins yet do not have the will of giving up the previous vanities and inordinate affections of their mind, but who want to hold on to their unjust acquisitions, who want to love the world in themselves and in their families, who blush for humility and do want not to flee from corrupt habits or to restrain their bodies from

superfluity, for such as these the feathers, that is, the indulgences, only result in a throwing up. This means that they obtain contrition and confession by which sin is thrown out and God's grace is gained. Then, if they wish to cooperate in order to obtain it for themselves, and have an upright intention, they shall fly as if on wings away from the hands of the devil and into the bosom of God.”

She answers: ”O, Mother of mercy, pray for this man, so that he may find favor in your Son's sight!” She says to her: ”The Holy Spirit does visit him, but there is something rocklike in front of his heart that prevents God's grace from entering. God, you see, is like a hen warming her eggs out of which come living chickens. All the eggs under the hen receive her warmth, but not any other eggs lying about. The mother does not herself break the shell of the egg in which the chick is being formed, but the chick tries to break the shell with its own beak. When the mother sees that, she prepares a warmer place for her chick to hatch.

Likewise, God visits everyone with his grace. Some people say to themselves: 'We want to keep away from sin and strive for perfection as far as we are able.' The Holy Spirit visits such people more frequently, so that they are more perfectly able to do so. Those people who entrust all their will to God and do not want to do even the least little thing against God's love but imitate, instead, those others whom they see tending toward perfection, abiding by the counsel of humble persons, and struggling wisely against carnal tendencies, these God places underneath himself, as a hen does with her chicks, and he makes his yoke light for them and comforts them in difficulties. Those people who follow their own will, however, and think that the little good they do is worthy of reward in God's sight, and do not strive for greater perfection but stay on in whatever delights their mind, using the example of others to excuse their own weaknesses and the corruption of others as a way to lessen their own guilt, such people do not turn into God's little chicks, because they do not possess the will to break through the hardness and vanity of their hearts. Rather, if they could, they would prefer to live for as long as they were able to persevere in sin.

That good man, Zacchaeus, did not act so, nor did Mary Magdalene. Instead, insofar as they had offended God in all their limbs, they gave him all their limbs in reparation for their offenses. Insofar as they had risen mortally in worldly rank, they lowered themselves humbly through the contempt of the world. Indeed, it is difficult to love God and the world at the same time, unless you are like the animal that has eyes both fore and aft, and no matter how careful it is, such an animal will suffer. People who are like Zacchaeus and Magdalene have chosen the safer part.”

EXPLANATION

This was a bailiff of Östergötland who came to the jubilee year more out of fear than of love. Concerning him, Christ says in Rome: ”Everyone who has escaped some danger should be careful not to fall back again into it. Overconfident sailors are at peril even in port. This man should thus beware of returning to his former office. Otherwise, if he is not careful, he will lose the object of his desires, the goods he has gathered will fall to strangers, his sons will not receive their inheritance, and he himself will die a painful death among foreigners.”

When he returned, however, he once again became a tax collector, and everything turned out as foretold.

St. Agnes's excellent instruction to the daughter about living in a good and praiseworthy fashion, and about avoiding a bad life displeasing to God. A carriage symbolizes here fortitude and patience; its four wheels symbolize these four virtues: the complete surrender of everything for God's sake, humility, loving God wisely, and restraining the flesh discerningly. Certain other things are also added about members of religious orders.

Chapter 17

Agnes speaks to the bride of Christ: ”Did you see Lady Pride in her carriage of pride today?” The bride answers her: ”I saw her, and I got upset, because flesh and blood, dust and dirt was looking to be praised instead of humbling herself as she ought rightly to do. Such a display

means nothing other than a lavish wasting of God's gifts, mere vulgar adulation, a trial to the righteous, a misery to the poor, a provocation to God, a forgetting of one's nature, an aggravation of one's future judgment, and the loss of souls.”

Agnes answers: ”My daughter, be happy that you have been saved from things like that. Let me tell you about a carriage in which you can rest securely. The carriage where you should sit is fortitude and patience in suffering. When people begin to keep the flesh in check and to entrust all their will to God, then either the mind is troubled by pride, puffing people up above and beyond themselves, as though they were righteous and had become like God, or else impatience and lack of discernment break them so that they either fall back into their old habits or fail in strength and so become unfit for the work of God. This is why a discerning patience is necessary so that a person does not relapse impatiently or persevere undiscerningly but, rather, adapts to his or her own capacity and circumstances.

The first wheel of this carriage is a wholehearted intention to surrender everything for the sake of God and to desire nothing but God. Many there are who give up temporal possessions in order to avoid the bother but keep enough for their use and desire. Their wheel is not easily steered or guided, for when they feel the pinch of poverty, they desire adequate comfort, and when problems weigh down on them, they demand prosperity. When humiliation tries them, they murmur against God's providence and seek to obtain honors.

When asked to do something that goes against their inclinations, they desire their freedom. Accordingly, a person's will is pleasing to God when it seeks nothing of its own both in good times and in bad.

The second wheel is humility. This makes people regard themselves as unworthy of any good thing, keeping their sins in mind at all times and looking on themselves as guilty in God's sight. The third wheel is a wise love for God. A wise love for God obviously belongs to people who examine themselves and detest their vices, who are saddened by the sins of their neighbors and relatives but rejoice in their spiritual progress toward

God, who do not want their friends to live for enjoyment and comfort but to serve God, and who are wary of their friends' worldly advancement, in case it entails offenses against God. Such, then, is the wise love that detests vice, that does not fawn on people in order to gain favor or honor but loves those people more who are seen to be more fervent in their charity for God.

The fourth wheel is the discerning restraint of the flesh. A married person may reason in this manner: 'Look, the flesh is pulling me about inordinately. If I live according to the flesh, I know for certain that I will anger the Creator of the flesh, who is able to wound and enfeeble, to kill and to give life. Therefore, for the love and fear of God, I will restrain my flesh with a good will. I will live in a decent and orderly way to the honor of God.' A person with such thoughts, who also seeks the help of God, has a wheel that is acceptable to God. If he or she belongs to a religious order and reasons thus: 'Look, the flesh is pulling me toward pleasure, and I even have the place, the time, the means, and the age to enjoy it, yet with God's help, and for the sake of my holy vows, I will not sin just to gain a momentary pleasure. I made a great vow to God: I entered poor and shall depart poorer and undergo judgment for each and every action. Therefore, I will abstain so as not to offend my God or scandalize my neighbor or do myself injury.' Abstinence like that deserves a great reward.

Another person may be living amid honors and pleasures and may reason in this way: 'Look, I have plenty of everything, but there are needy poor and we all have one God. What have I done to deserve what I have or what have they done not to deserve it? What, after all, is the flesh but food for worms? What are all these pleasures but a source of nausea and sickness, a waste of time and an inducement to sin? Therefore, I shall keep my flesh in check, so that worms do not run riot in it, and so that I do not receive a heavier sentence or waste my time of penance. Perhaps my poorly trained flesh will not be easily bent to the coarse fare of a pauper, but I shall withdraw it by degrees from certain delicacies that it can easily do without, so that it gets what it needs but nothing beyond that.' Someone with such thoughts, and who makes an effort to act on them according to his or her ability, can be called both confessor and martyr, for it is a kind of

martyrdom to have access to pleasure and not to make use of it, to live in honor yet to despise honor, to have a great reputation yet to think little of oneself. Such a wheel is very pleasing to God.

Well, my daughter, I have described for you the image of a carriage. Its driver is your angel, so long as you do not shake off his bridle and yoke from your neck, that is, so long as you do not dismiss his saving inspirations by opening up your senses and your heart to vain or obscene things. Now I want to tell you about the kind of carriage in which that lady was seated. That carriage is obviously impatience - her impatience with God and with her fellow man and with herself. She is impatient with God when she criticizes his secret decisions, for things do not go as well for her as she would like. She maligns her fellow man, for she cannot get at his possessions. She is moreover impatient with herself, for she impatiently reveals the hidden things of her heart.

The first wheel of this carriage is pride, in that she gives preference to herself and is judgmental of others; she despises the lowly and is ambitious for honor. The second wheel is disobedience to God's precepts. This leads her to make excuses in her heart for her own weaknesses, to make light of her guilt, to be presumptuous in her heart and to defend her own wickedness. The third wheel is greediness for worldly possessions. This leads her to spend her possessions wastefully, to neglect and forget her own situation and the coming world, to fret at heart, to be lukewarm in the love of God. The fourth wheel is her self-love. This bars out reverence and fear of God and distracts her attention from her own death and judgment.

The driver of this carriage is the devil. He fills her with audacity and glee in every undertaking he inspires in her. The two horses drawing the carriage are the hope of a long life and the intention to keep on sinning until the very end. The bridle is her guilty fear about going to confession. Through her hope of a long life and her intention to persevere in sin, this guilty fear pulls the spirit from the straight path and ladens it so heavily with sin that neither fear nor shame nor warning can make her get up. Just when she thinks she is on firm footing, she will sink down to the depths unless the grace of God comes to her aid."

ADDITION

Christ speaks of the same lady: "She is a viper with the tongue of a harlot, the bile of dragons in her heart, and bitter poison in her flesh. Her eggs will therefore be poisonous. Happy are they who have no experience of the burden of them!"

The daughter's words of praise to the glorious Virgin, and the gracious response of the Virgin to the daughter. In it the Virgin grants her daughter many graces as well as many other good things both from herself and from the apostles and saints.

Chapter 18

"O sweet Mary," says the bride, "blessed are you with an eternal blessing, for you were a Virgin before childbirth, a Virgin after childbirth, a Virgin together with your spouse, an undoubted Virgin for a doubting spouse. So blessed are you, for you are Mother and Virgin, God's dearest one, purer than all the angels, the one most full of faith in the company of the apostles, alone in the bitterest sorrow of your heart, whose abstinence outshines that of all the confessors, whose chaste continence excels that of all the virgins. So may all things up above and down below bless you, for, through you, God the Creator became a man; through you the righteous find grace, sinners find pardon, the dead find life, the exiled return to their homeland."

The Virgin answers: "It is written that when Peter bore witness to my Son and called him the Son of God, he received the answer: 'Blessed are you, Simon, for body and blood have not revealed this to you.' So I say now: This salutation was not revealed to you by your bodily soul but by him who was without beginning and is without end. Be therefore humble, and I will be merciful to you. John the Baptist, as he promised, will be gentle to you; Peter will be mild, and Paul strong as a giant. John the Baptist is going to say to you: 'Daughter, sit on my lap!' Peter will say: 'My daughter, open your mouth, and I shall feed you with sweet food!' Paul

will dress you and arm you with the arms of love. And, who am the Mother, will present you to my Son.

But, my daughter, you can understand all this even in a spiritual sense.

John, whose name means the grace of God, denotes true obedience. He was and is sweet and gentle indeed - sweet to his parents for his wondrous grace, sweet to humankind for his extraordinary preaching, sweet to God for his holiness of life and obedience. He was obedient in his youth, obedient in fortune and misfortune; obedient, and constantly humble when he might have been honored; obedient, too, in his death. This is why obedience says: 'Sit on my lap!' That means: Rise to lowly things, and you will have lofty ones. Give up bitter things and you will get sweet ones. Give up your own will, if you want to be little. Despise earthly things, and you will become heavenly. Despise superfluity, and you will have spiritual abundance.

Peter denotes holy faith: the faith of the Holy Church. Just as Peter remained steadfast until the end, so too the faith of the Holy Church will remain steadfast without end. This is why Peter, that is, the holy faith, says: 'Open your mouth and you will have good food!' This means: Open the intellect of your soul, and in the Holy Church you will find the sweetest of foods, that is, the very body of the Lord in the sacrament of the altar, the new and the old law, the teachings of the doctors, the patience of the martyrs, the humility of the confessors, the pureness of the virgins, and indeed the foundation of all the virtues. Accordingly, seek the holy faith in the church of St. Peter, keep in mind the sought-after faith, and then put it into practice.

Paul denotes patience, for he was zealous toward those who fought against holy faith, joyful in hardships, long-suffering in hope, patient in infirmities, compassionate with those in pain, humble in virtues, hospitable with the poor, merciful toward sinners, the teacher and master of all, persevering in the love of God until the end. Thus, Paul, that is, patience, will arm you with the arms of the virtues, for true patience, founded upon and strengthened by the examples and patience of Christ and his saints, enkindles the love of God in the heart, makes the spirit burn for strong

action, renders a man humble, mild, merciful, zealous for heaven, mindful of himself, and persevering in the tasks undertaken.

And so, the Mother of mercy, shall introduce to my Son everyone whom obedience nourishes in the lap of humility, everyone whom the faith feeds with the food of sweetness, everyone whom patience dresses in the arms of virtue, and my Son will crown that person with his sweet crown. In him is incomprehensible strength, incomparable wisdom, unspeakable goodness, wonderful love. Then no one will be able to snatch that person away from his hand. But, my daughter, though I am speaking to you, yet by you I mean all of those who follow the holy faith with deeds of love. Just as by the one man, Israel, all Israelites were meant, so by you are understood all the true faithful.”

The daughter's words to the Lady in praise of her virtue and beauty, and the Virgin's answer confirming her praise, and the Son's comparison of his Mother to a goldsmith.

Chapter 19

“Sweet Mary, fresh beauty, shining beauty! Come and listen to me, so that my ugliness may be purified and my love enkindled! Your beauty gives three gifts to the head. First, the cleansing of the memory so that God's words enter smoothly; second, the pleasant retention of the words heard; third, their zealous communication to one's neighbor. Your beauty also grants three things to the heart. First, it removes the heavy burden of sloth, when your love and humility are contemplated; second, it brings tears to the eyes, when your poverty and patient suffering are brought to mind; third, it gives the heart a sweet inner fire, when the memory of your devotion is sincerely recalled.

Truly, my Lady, you are the most precious beauty, the most desirable beauty, for you are the help given to the sick, the comforter in sorrow, everyone's mediator. Thus, all those who have heard that you would be

born, and those who know you to have already been born, can surely exclaim: 'Come, beauty most splendid, and light up our darkness. Come, beauty most precious, and take away our reproach. Come, beauty most sweet, and lessen our bitterness. Come, beauty most powerful, and undo our captivity. Come, beauty most fair, and destroy our foulness!' Therefore, may such great beauty be blessed and revered, the beauty that all the patriarchs longed to see, of which all the prophets sang, in which all the elect rejoice!"

The Mother answers: "May God, my beauty, be blessed! It is he who has given you such words to speak! And so I tell you that the most ancient beauty, the eternal and highest beauty, which made and created me, shall be your comfort. The beauty that is oldest and yet new, renewing all things, which was in me and was born of me, shall teach you wonders. The most desirable beauty, which gives joy and delight to all, shall inflame the spirit of your love.

So trust in God, for when the heavenly beauty appears, all earthly beauty will crumble and be regarded as dung."

Then God's Son said to his Mother: "O blessed Mother, you are like a goldsmith preparing a beautiful object. All those who see the object are filled with gladness and present precious stones or gold in order to perfect it. Thus, dear Mother, you offer help to everyone struggling to rise to God, and leave no one without your consolation. You can therefore well be called the blood of the heart of God. Just as each member of the body receives life and strength from the blood, so too everyone comes to life again after sin and is made more fruitful before God through you."

St. Agnes's lesson to the daughter about not relapsing and not advancing properly, and about the right way to begin or continue with abstinence, and about what kind of continence is pleasing to God.

Chapter 20

Agnes speaks: "Daughter, stand firm and do not relapse, for a serpent lies at your heels ready to bite. Yet, do not rush unduly ahead either, for the tip of a sharp lance is in front of you, and if you advance at the wrong speed, you will be wounded. What does a relapse mean if not letting trials lead to regrets about having taken on a more austere and wholesome way of life and to a desire of returning to old habits and delighting the mind with dirty thoughts? Such thoughts, even if they give some pleasure to the mind, only obscure every good thing and by degrees lead away from all goodness. Nor should you rush unduly ahead, that is, punish yourself beyond your strength or imitate the good works of others beyond your capacity. God has ordained from eternity that heaven should be opened to sinners through works of love and humility, yet by preserving moderation and discretion in every way. Now, then, the envious devil persuades the imperfect man to fast beyond his strength, to promise to do unaccustomed things that he cannot manage, to desire to imitate more perfect models without considering his own strengths and weaknesses. The devil does this either in order that, when the man's strength fails him, he should continue with his badly begun vows out of human embarrassment rather than for the sake of God, or in order that he should quickly give up the struggle because of his indiscretion and weakness.

For this reason, use as your measure your own self, that is, your strengths and weaknesses, since some people are stronger by nature, others weaker, some more fervent by the grace of God, others keener due to good habits. Hence, regulate your life in agreement with the advice of God-fearing men, so that the serpent does not sting you due to your thoughtlessness, and so that the poisonous tip of the sword, that is, the poisonous suggestion of the devil, does not delude your mind so as to make you want to seem more than you are or long to become something beyond your strength and powers.

There are, indeed, some people who believe they can reach heaven by their own merits, and God spares them from the devil's temptations due to his hidden plan. There are others who think they can make reparation to God for their transgressions with their own works. The error of all of these is altogether damning, for even if a person were to kill his body a hundred

times over, he could not make up a thousandth of the account he owes to God, because it is God who gives us the ability and the will, seasons and health, who fills us with a desire for the good, who gives us riches and honor, who kills and gives life, raises up and lays low. All things are in his hand. Hence to him alone should all honor be given, and no one deserves to be counted for anything before God.

Since you are wondering about the lady who came for indulgences but was corrupted, I answer you: There are some women who have the virtue of continence but do not love it. They experience neither a great longing for pleasure nor violent temptation. If honorable proposals of marriage were made to them, they would accept. However, since no great offers are made to them, they look down on lesser offers. In this way, continence sometimes gives rise to pride and presumption, which, by divine permission, leads to a fall, such as you have now heard. If a woman were so minded as not to want to be stained even once, not even if the whole world were offered her, it would be impossible for such a woman to be left to shame. If, however, in his secret justice, God permitted such a one to fall, it would rather lead to her reward than to sin, provided that she fell against her will.

Know, then, that God is like an eagle that from on high views everything down below. If an eagle should see anything rising up from the ground, it immediately swoops down and snatches it. If it catches sight of something poisonous coming against it, it would pierce it like an arrow. If something unclean is dropped on it from above, it gets rid of it with a great shake just like a goose does. God acts like that as well. If he sees human hearts rising against him due to the weakness of the flesh or the devil's temptations against the will of the spirit, he immediately swoops down through an inspiration of contrition and penance and brings it to naught, making the person return to God and come to himself again. If the poison of carnal desire or greed enters the heart, God quickly pierces the mind with the arrow of his love, so that the person does not persevere in sin and get separated from God.

If some impurity of pride or the dirt of lust defiles the spirit, he shakes it quickly off, just like a goose, through constant faith and hope, so that the

spirit does not become hardened in vice or the soul that is joined to God become stained unto damnation.

Therefore, my daughter, in all your feelings and actions, consider God's justice and mercy, and always keep the end in sight.”

The bride's words to God concerning his virtue and splendor, and the Virgin's consoling answer to the daughter, and about how God's good servants should not stop preaching and admonishing people, whether the people convert or not; the Virgin shows this by means of a comparison.

Chapter 21

“Blessed are you, my God, who are three and one: three persons in one nature. You are goodness and wisdom itself; you are beauty and power itself; you are justice and truth itself. All things live and subsist through you. You are like a flower that grows alone in a field. All those who draw near to it receive sweetness for their palate, an uplift for their spirits, a delight for their eyes and strength in every other limb. Likewise, all who come near to you become more beautiful by leaving sin behind, more wise by following your will rather than the flesh, more righteous by seeking the advantage of the soul and the glory of God. Therefore, most kind God, grant me to love that which pleases you, to resist temptations bravely, to scorn all worldly things and to keep you constantly in my memory.”

The Mother answers: ”This salutation came to you through the merits of good Jerome, who left false wisdom and found true wisdom, who scorned earthly honor and was rewarded with God himself. Happy is such a Jerome, happy those who imitate his life and doctrine. He was a lover of widows, a mirror for those advancing toward perfection, a teacher of all truth and purity. But tell me, my daughter, what is troubling you in your heart?” She said:

”A thought occurred to me that said, 'If you are good, your goodness is enough for you. Why judge and admonish and teach your betters, something that belongs neither to your state nor position?' This thought so

hardens the spirit that it even neglects its own progress and grows completely cold to God's love.”

The Mother answers: ”This thought has also held back many advanced souls from God. The devil hinders good people from speaking to the wicked so that they may not be brought to feel compunction. He also hinders them from speaking to the good so that they will not be raised to a higher rank, for, when good people hear good doctrine, they are raised to a greater reward and a higher rank. For example, the eunuch who was reading Isaiah would have received one of the lesser punishments in hell, but Philip met him and taught him a shortcut to heaven and so raised him up to a level of happiness. Likewise, Peter was sent to Cornelius. If Cornelius had died beforehand, he would indeed have come to a place of rest because of his faith, but then came Peter and led him to the gateway to life. Similarly, Paul came to Denis and led him to the reward of blessedness. For this reason, the friends of God should not grow tired in God's service but should labor on in order that the wicked may be made better and the good may attain a greater perfection.

Anyone with the will to whisper in the ears of every passerby that Jesus Christ truly is the Son of God, and who struggles as far as he or she can for the conversion of others, even though no one or only a few convert, will still obtain the same reward as if all of them had converted. I will show you this by means of a comparison. If, on the order of their lord, two mercenaries dig through the hard rock of a mountain, and one of them were to find choice gold there, but the other none, both of them would be deserving of the same wages because of their work and their intention. In the same way, Paul, who converted many people, and the other apostles, who converted fewer, were nevertheless all united in their intention. God's dispensation, however, remains hidden. One should therefore never give up, not even if only a few or none at all are open to God's words. As the thorn protects the rose and the donkey carries his master, so too the devil, like a thorn of sin, is as useful to the elect through the tribulations he causes as thorns are to roses. In this way, they are not stupidly overcome by the presumption of their hearts. Thus, just like a donkey, he conveys them to God's consolation and a greater reward.”

About how human malice in modern times surpasses the cunning of the devil, and about how people are now quicker to sin than the devil is to tempt, and about the sentence pronounced against such people, and how God's friends should labor with courage and haste in their preaching; also, concerning the infusion of knowledge in God's friends.

Chapter 22

The Son speaks: "If I could get upset, I would rightly be able to say now: I regret having made humankind. They have become like animals that of their own free will run into the nets. However much you cry out to them, they still follow their own selfish appetites. And not all the blame can be put on the devil's violent attempts on humankind - no, rather, the people themselves outstrip his malice. Like hunting dogs that are first led on leashes, but then, once they are accustomed to catching and devouring animals, speedily reach the prey ahead of their leader, so also humankind, now accustomed to sinning and fascinated by it, is quicker to sin than the devil is to tempt. That is not strange. It has been a long time since the Apostolic See, the head of the world, was pleasing to God by its sanctity of life and example, as it was in earlier times, and all the other members have therefore been made weak and listless. They do not consider the reason why God in his riches became poor and needy - in order to teach us to scorn perishable things and to love heavenly ones. Man is poor by nature but has become rich by means of false riches. This is what everyone tries to imitate, and few are found who do not imitate it.

Hence, the plowman shall come from the Almighty. Whetted by the wisest One, he does not seek property or beautiful bodies nor has any respect for the power of the mighty nor fears the threats of princes nor is swayed by human favor. He shall sow human flesh and raze to the ground the homes of spirits; he shall deliver bodies to maggots and souls to the ones whom they served. Therefore, may my friends, to whom I am sending you, labor with courage and with haste, for what I am telling you will not take place in the last days, as I said before, but in these very days. Many of

those yet living will see with their own eyes the fulfillment of the scripture that says: 'May their wives be widows and their sons fatherless,' and they shall lose all that they desire.

However, I, merciful God, shall receive all those that come to me in humility. I shall give myself to those who fulfill the works of righteousness, for it is right to clean out the house in which the king shall enter, to wash the glass so that the drink may be clear, to thresh the grain briskly from its husks, and to press down hard on whatever is being molded into a form so that it attains the shape of the form. As summer comes after winter, so too I shall grant consolation after their hardships to those who long to be as little children and who place more value on the things of heaven than on those of earth. However, just as a man is not born and dies at one and the same time, so all this will be fulfilled in its own time.

Know, too, that I intend to treat some people according to the common proverb: 'The whip will spur him on' - the pain will compel him to speed up. I will treat others as it is written: 'Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.' To a third set of people I shall speak soothingly and inspiringly: 'Come, ignorant and simple persons, and I shall give you a mouth and a wisdom such as the tongue-waggers will not be able to oppose.' This is what I have already done in these days: I have filled the simple with my wisdom, and they are proof against the learned. I cast out the boastful and mighty, and they quickly subsided. That is no wonder: For I commanded the wise to cut off the serpents' tongues, as you heard, and they refused. Not even their mother, who was the scourge of the commons, was willing to quench their throats in order to quench the fire of desire kindled in her children's hearts, as I bade. This is why I have cut them down in their season of happiness and have cut off their own tongues."

The words of John the Evangelist to the glorious Virgin about a mere sinful hypocrite, and the Virgin's answer regarding his characteristics, and about the devil's deceptions toward him, and about how the good spirit is recognized by seven signs and the bad spirit is discerned by as many signs.

Chapter 23

John the Evangelist said to God's Mother: "Hear me, Virgin and Mother of one Son, not several sons, Mother of the only begotten Son of God, the fashioner and redeemer of all things. Listen, I say, as you surely do listen, to how this man has been deceived by the devil, how he is struggling to obtain something impossible, how and in what matters he has been instructed by the spirit of lies, how far he has removed himself from God in his sheep's clothing but with his lion's heart. I taught that there are three who bear witness in heaven and on earth: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The evil spirit, however, bears witness to this man that he has become completely holy. Yet the Father does not strengthen him with his power nor does the Son visit him with his wisdom nor does the Holy Spirit inflame him with his love. That is no wonder, for he aspires to power against the power of the Father; he wants to be wise against the wisdom of the Son; he is inflamed but not as the Holy Spirit sets aflame. So ask your Son either to take him away soon, so that no more souls may be lost, or to humble him quickly for his errors."

The Mother answered: "Hear me, then, virgin, though you are a male and not a female person. You are the one whom it pleased God to call away from the world through the easiest of deaths after my own. Indeed, it was as though I had fallen asleep when my soul and body were separated, but then I awoke in everlasting joy. No wonder, indeed, for I had suffered more bitterly than all the others at my Son's death, and it pleased God thus to separate me from the world through the easiest of deaths. But you were closest to me among the apostles, and the object of greater signs of affection than all the others, and my Son's passion was bitterer for you than for the rest, because you beheld it at a closer distance than others, and you also lived longer than the others, as if you became a martyr through the deaths of them all. It therefore pleased God to call you from the world through the easiest of deaths after my own, for the Virgin had been entrusted to a virgin. Therefore, what you asked for shall be done without delay.

My daughter, let me show you what sort of person this man is of whom we are speaking. He is like a servant of that coin-maker, the devil. The devil melts down and then stamps his coin - that is, his servant - with his suggestions and temptations, until he has fashioned him after his liking. Once he has corrupted and twisted a person's will toward the pleasures of the flesh and the love of the world, he then impresses his image and signature on the person, and it becomes apparent enough from external signs who it is whom that person wholeheartedly loves. When a man carries out in act the desire of his mind and wants to get more involved in worldly affairs than his state in life requires, and would do and desire even more things, if he were able, then he is shown to be the devil's perfect coin.

You should realize, however, that God's coin differs from the devil's coin. God's coin is of gold, shining, pliable, and precious. Every soul with the stamp of God on it shines with divine love, is pliable in her patience, and precious in her continual good works. Accordingly, every good soul is melted down by God's power and tested with many temptations. Through them the soul, contemplating her defects and her origins as well as God's kindness and patience toward her, is rendered all the more precious to God, the more humble, patient, and conscientious she is found to be.

The devil's coin, however, is of copper and lead. It is copper, because it bears a likeness to gold: It is hard and pliable, yet not the way gold is.

Likewise, the unrighteous soul seems to herself to be righteous, judges everyone, is more interested in herself than in others, is unpliant with respect to humble actions, soft in acting in her own interest, intractable in her own plans, admirable to the world, despicable to God. The devil's coin is also leaden in that it is ugly, soft and pliable, and heavy. Likewise, the unrighteous soul is ugly in her lustful desires, burdensome in her longing for the world, as pliable as a reed that bends in the direction of whatever the devil inspires in her mind, sometimes, indeed, being even more ready to do it than the devil is to tempt her to it. This is the disposition of the coin-maker's servant. He gets bored in keeping the observances of his rule, as he vowed, and thinks up ways of gaining people's appreciation through a pretended holiness, all the while feeding his body sumptuously. The devil, then, soon filled his head with lies at night. They deluded him into

believing impossible things that will not come to be. Instead, his life will be cut short, and he will not obtain the honor for which he so longs.

Whenever one comes across an unknown coin, one sends it to a wise expert who has sufficient knowledge of its weight and shape. But where will we find such an expert? Even if we did find him, he may care little or nothing about whether the coin is counterfeit or genuine. There is only one solution in such a case, as I will explain by way of a comparison. If you handed a florin to a dog, it would not bother to take it. But if the florin were coated with fat, there is no doubt that the dog would take it then. The present case is like that. If you went to a theological expert and said: 'That man is a heretic,' he would not be bothered, for his love of God is altogether grown cold. However, if you said: 'He has plenty of florins,' then everyone would rush to him. Therefore, it will soon be as Paul says: 'I will destroy and humble the wisdom of the wise, and I will exalt the humble.'

My daughter, you can recognize both the Holy Spirit and the unclean spirit through seven signs. First, the Spirit of God makes a man deem the world worthless and consider in his heart all worldly honor as mere air. Second, it endears God to the soul, and all delight in the flesh grows cold. Third, it inspires him to patience and to glorying only in God. Fourth, it stimulates the mind to be loving and compassionate with one's neighbor and even with one's enemies. Fifth, it inspires him to all kinds of abstinence, even from licit things. Sixth, it makes him trust in God in the midst of hardships and even to glory in hardships. Seventh, it gives him the desire of wanting to depart and to be with Christ, rather than to prosper in the world and become soiled.

The evil spirit has seven effects to the contrary. First, it makes the world seem sweet, and heaven distasteful. Second, it makes a man seek honors and forget about the meaning of his life. Third, it arouses hatred and impatience in the heart. Fourth, it makes him bold toward God and obstinate in his own plans. Fifth, it leads him to make light of his sins and to make excuses for them. Sixth, it inspires in him frivolity of mind and every carnal impurity.

Seventh, it inspires in him the hope of a long life and a feeling a shame about going to confession. Guard your thoughts carefully, then, so that you do not get deceived by this spirit.”

EXPLANATION

This was a priest of the Cistercian order who, after eighteen years of apostasy, repented and returned to the monastery. He said that it was impossible for anyone to be damned and denied that God spoke with anyone in this world or that anyone could see the face of God prior to God's judgment. When Lady Bridget heard this, the Holy Spirit said to her: ”Go and tell that brother this: 'Brother, you do not see as I do how the devil still keeps your mind and tongue tied even in your old age. God is eternal, and his reward is eternal. Therefore, return quickly and wholeheartedly to God and to the true faith, for you will assuredly not get up out of this bed but die. However, if you believe, you will be a vessel for God's honor.' ”

He was reduced to tears and thanked Lady Bridget, and he reformed his life so perfectly that, when his brothers were called together at the hour of his death, he told them: ”O my brothers, I am assured that God all merciful has accepted my contrition and will grant me pardon. Pray for me, because I believe everything that the Holy Church believes.” Then, after having received God's sacraments, he passed away.

The Virgin's words to the daughter about how God's servants should behave toward impatient people, and about how pride is likened to a vat.

Chapter 24

The Mother speaks: ”When a vat of beer is heated up and starts to swell and rise, it steams and foams up, sometimes more, sometimes less, and then suddenly settles down again. People standing around the vat understand that these exhalations quickly sink down and that they arise due to the strength of the beer and are a way of releasing the heat. So they

wait patiently for it to end and for the beer or the wine to be ready. Two things happen when people standing around the vat put their noses too close to the bubbles: They suffer either a violent sneezing or a bad headache.

It is the same in the spiritual life. It sometimes happens that some people's hearts swell and rise due to the pride and impatience of their minds.

When virtuous men see such a swelling up, they understand that it proceeds either from spiritual instability or carnal motives. Therefore, they put up patiently with that person's insulting words and look toward the end, knowing that the calm follows the storm, and that patience is stronger than a besieger of cities, since it conquers the man within, which is the most difficult thing to do. There are, however, those who are overly impatient, and they repay insult for insult. Paying no attention to the glorious reward of patience, nor to the contemptibility of worldly favor, these people incur an illness of mind due to their impatient temptations - they bring their noses too close to the bubbling vat, that is, they take the insults, which are nothing but air, too much to heart.

So, whenever any of you see people being impatient, guard your tongues with God's help, and do not leave off doing the good work you have begun because of impatient words. Pretend instead, and as far as justice allows, that you have not heard what you have heard, until those people who are looking for an argument say explicitly what they mean in their hearts.”

The Mother's admonishment to the daughter about how a person should not pay attention to carnal desires but should nourish the body on a moderate diet of necessities, and about how a person should stand by his or her body but not in the body.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: "You should be like a bride standing before the bed-curtain, ready to do as the bridegroom wishes as soon as he calls. This bed-curtain is the body that veils the soul and has to be constantly washed, tried, and tested. The body is like a donkey that needs a diet moderate enough so as not to become gluttonous, sensible work so as not to become proud, and constant beating so as not to grow lazy.

So, stand by the bed-curtain, that is, stand by the body but not in the body in the sense of attending to the desires of the flesh but nourishing the body on a moderate diet of necessities. That person stands by the body and not in the body who keeps his or her body from unnecessary desire for food. Stand also behind the bed-curtain in the sense of scorning the lust of the flesh, doing honor to God, and spending your energies entirely for him.

In this way stood those who spread their bodies out like clothes for God, who were at all times ready to do as he wished, whenever it pleased him to call them. They did not have a long way to go to him whom they kept ever present. Heavy burdens did not weigh upon their necks, for they scorned every burden and were in the world in body alone. This is why they flew free and unimpeded to heaven. Nothing impeded them but a dry and well-disciplined garment, and when they had taken it off, they obtained their heart's desire.

This man had a dangerous fall but wisely raised himself up. He defended himself like a man, fought steadfastly, and persevered with persistence. This is why he shall now receive an eternal crown and find himself already in the presence of God."

The Virgin's admonition to the daughter about which virtuous acts merit eternal life and which do not, and about the great merit there is in obedience.

Chapter 26

"A tree has many blossoms, but not all of them come to fruition. Likewise there are many virtuous acts, yet they do not all merit a reward in

heaven, if they are not done with wise discretion. For example, fasting, prayer, visits to shrines of the saints are virtuous acts, but if they are not done with the spirit of a person who hopes to enter heaven with humility, considering himself a useless servant in every way and showing wise discretion in everything, then they are of little value for eternity.

Consider the case of two men, one of whom is under obedience, while the other is free and unbound. If the one who is free fasts, he will get an ordinary reward. However, if the one who is under obedience eats meat on a day of fasting in accordance with the ordinance of his rule and for the sake of obedience, though he would rather fast if it had not been against obedience, then he will get a double reward: first, because of his obedience; second, because he put off his own desire and did not carry out his own wishes.

You should therefore be like a bride who prepares the bridal chamber before the bridegroom comes. Be also like a mother who prepares the baby's clothes before it is born. Again, be like a tree that bears flowers before the coming of the fruits. Finally, be like a clean glass ready to receive the drink before it is poured.”

The Virgin's complaint to the daughter about a man of counterfeit devotion, comparing him to a poorly armed squire in a physical battle.

Chapter 27

The Mother speaks: ”That man there says he loves me, but he turns his back to me when he is serving me. When I speak to him, he says: 'What's that you say?' and he averts his eyes from me and looks at other things more to his delight. He is strangely armed. He is like a soldier in a physical battle who has the visor of his helmet at the back of his head and carries his shield on his shoulders when he should have it on his arm. His scabbard is empty, for he had cast off his sword. His cloak, which should

protect his chest and body, is lying under him on the saddle, and his saddle is not strapped to the horse.

This is the way this man is armed spiritually in God's sight. Accordingly, he does not know how to distinguish between friend and foe nor how to inflict injury on the enemy. The spirit that fights in him is like one who reasons as follows: 'I want to be among the last line of soldiers in the fight, so that I can keep the thicket of the woods in sight, in case the first soldiers lose the battle. But if they win, I will run up front quickly so that I will be counted among the first soldiers.'

Thus, the man who gave up the fight acted according to the wisdom of the flesh and not for the love of God."

The Virgin's words about three kinds of hardship, symbolized by three kinds of bread.

Chapter 28

The Mother speaks: "When you make dough, you have to knead and work it a lot. Fine wheaten bread is set before lords, but coarser bread is set before commoners, and an even worse kind of bread is given to dogs.

The kneading stands for hardship. A spiritual person suffers great hardship when God does not receive honor from his creatures and when there is little charity in them. Those who suffer in this way are the kind of fine wheat in which God and all the heavenly host rejoice. All those troubled by worldly adversity are like the coarser kind of bread. For many people, however, this coarser kind is good enough for them to reach heaven. Those who suffer because they are not able to do all the evil they wish are like the bread of the dogs in hell."

The Mother's words to the daughter about how there are devils to make people fall, others to slow down their progress, and still others to tempt them in fasting, and about the way to oppose these devils.

Chapter 29

The Mother speaks: "All these beings that you see surrounding you are your spiritual enemies, that is, spirits of the devil. The ones who can be seen with poles that have nooses are the ones who want you all to fall into mortal sins. Those whom you see with grappling hooks in their hands are the ones who desire to slow you down in God's service and make you reluctant to do good. Those holding the instruments with spikes like pitchforks to get a hold of and stimulate human desire are the ones who tempt you to take on good deeds that exceed your capacity - whether they are fasts, vigils, prayers, and toils or just spending your money in an unreasonable manner. Since these spirits are so eager to harm people, you must have the intention of not wanting to offend God. Furthermore, you must ask God to give you aid against their cruelty. In this way, then, their threats will not harm you."

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the precious and beautiful things of the world do not harm God's servants, even though they make use of them, so long as they use them in God's honor, and she points to the example of Paul.

Chapter 30

"It is written that Paul, that good apostle, said that he was a wise man in the presence of the prince who had arrested Peter, and he called Peter a truly poor man. Paul did not sin in this, because his words were for the honor of God.

This is also the case with those who desire and long to speak God's words. Unless they are dressed in suitable attire, they cannot come before the lords. Thus, they do not sin by dressing suitably, so long as they do not in their heart and mind regard the gold and clothes and precious gems as being more precious than their old accustomed clothing, since all the things that seem precious are but earth."

The Mother's words to the daughter showing her, by means of a comparison, that God's preachers and friends will not receive a lesser reward in God's sight if people are not converted by the preaching they have done with an upright intention than they would if the people do convert.

Chapter 31

God's Mother speaks: "Someone hires a worker for a job and tells him: 'Carry sand from the shore and examine each load to see if you can find a grain of gold there.' His wages will not be less if he finds nothing than if he uncovers a great amount.

This is also the case of a person who for the love of God labors in word and deed for the advancement of souls. His wages will not be less if he converts none of them than if he converts many. It is just as in the teacher's example. He said, 'A warrior who goes off to war on the orders of his lord, who is willing to struggle mightily but returns wounded and without having captured the enemy, will for the sake of his good intention receive no less a reward, though the battle was lost, than if he had obtained victory.'

It is the same with the friends of God. For each word and deed they do for God's sake and for the benefit of souls, and for each hour of hardship they suffer for God's sake, they will be rewarded, whether many convert or none at all."

The Mother's words to the daughter about her infinite mercy toward sinners and toward those who praise and honor her.

Chapter 32

The Mother speaks: "You have an expression that says, 'That sort of thing could make me leave my homeland.' I tell you so now: Nobody in the world is so great a sinner - provided he says in his heart that my Son is the Creator and Redeemer of the universe and dear to him in his inmost heart - that I am not prepared to come to him immediately, like a loving

mother to her son, and hug him and say: 'What would you like, my son?' Even if he had deserved the lowest punishment in hell, nevertheless, if only he has the intention of not caring for worldly honors or greed or carnal lust, such as the church condemns, and desires nothing but his own sustenance, then he and I will right away get along quite well together.

Tell the man who composes songs of praise for me - not for the sake of his own praise or reward but in praise of him who is worthy of all praise because of all his works - that just as worldly princes give a worldly reward to the people who praise them, so I will give him a spiritual remuneration. Just as there are many notes on a single syllable, so it pleases God to give him a crown in heaven for each syllable in his song. It will be said of him: 'Here comes the praiser, who did not compose his song for any temporal good but for God's sake alone.' ”

EXPLANATION

This man had temptations concerning the Holy Trinity. In an ecstasy he saw what looked like the faces of three women. The first said: "I have attended many weddings, but I have never seen one to be three." The second answered: "If there are three and one, it is necessary that one of them must be prior and another posterior, or else two in one." And the third added: "They cannot have created themselves, so who made them?" Then the Holy Spirit said openly: "We will come to him and make our abode in him." And when he awoke, he was free of the temptation.

After this, Christ said to Lady Bridget: "I am one and three. I want to show you what the Father's power is, what the Son's wisdom is, what the Holy Spirit's might is, in order to make known that I, God, am three and one: Father and Son and Holy Spirit." This revelation is complete once it is preached from the pulpit.

Christ said again: "Tell him that he gains greater merit in my sight through his illness than through his health. Lazarus grew brighter due to his pain, and Job more beloved due to his suffering. However, my chosen ones are not displeasing to me when they have good health, since their

heart is always with me and their body remains in wise abstinence and pious works.”

The bride's notable words about the city of Rome. They take the form of an inquiry, pointing to the Romans' earlier consolation, devotion, and good order; among both clerics and lay people, and asking why all this has now sadly been turned into desolation and disorder and abomination, as is clear from all the aforesaid, and about how unhappy Rome is both materially and spiritually.

Chapter 33

Reverend Sir, in addition to the other points of discussion, the pope should be told about the pitiable state of this city. Once it was a happy city, both materially and spiritually, but now it is unhappy, both materially and spiritually. It is materially unhappy, because its secular leaders, who should be its defenders, have turned into its cruelest plunderers. That is why its buildings lie in ruins. That is why many of its churches have been completely deserted, in which are preserved the relics of the saints whose blessed bones shine with glorious miracles and whose souls have been crowned in God's kingdom on high. With their ceilings fallen in and their doors removed, the temples of these saints have been converted into latrines for men, dogs, and beasts. The city is spiritually unhappy, because many of the decrees issued in the church by holy popes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God and the salvation of souls have now been abolished. In their place, alas, many new abuses have been adopted under the inspiration of the evil spirit for the dishonor of God and the perdition of souls.

The Holy Church had decreed that the clerics who were to go on to holy orders should follow a blessed way of life, serving God with solid devotion, and presenting to others a way of life worthy of the heavenly homeland through their good works. Ecclesial proceeds used to be given to such as these. Against this custom of the church, however, a grave abuse has arisen. This is that the goods of the church are given to laymen who, because of their canonical title, do not get married but, instead,

shamelessly keep concubines in their homes by day and in their beds at night, asserting boldly: "We are not allowed to marry, because we are canons."

Priests, deacons, and subdeacons, once upon a time, greatly abhorred the infamy of an impure life. Now, however, some of them are plainly delighted to see their whores walking about with swollen bellies in the midst of other women. They do not even blush when they are told by their friends: "A daughter or son will soon be borne for you, sir." Such men are more justly called the devil's pimps than ordained priests of the supreme God.

The holy fathers such as Benedict and others established monastic rules with the permission of the supreme pontiff. They built monasteries where the abbots used to live together with the friars, devoutly celebrating the night-hours and day-hours of the office and carefully forming the monks in a life of virtue. It was a pleasure, indeed, to visit monasteries then, when the chant of the monks used to give honor and glory to God by day and night, when people of evil living were set right by the very beauty of the monks' lives, when good people were strengthened by the godly teaching of prelates, and when the souls in purgatory obtained a blessed rest through their devout prayers. That monk was then held in highest honor who observed the rule most carefully, and he had the respect of God and men. A monk, however, who did not bother to keep the rule knew without a doubt that he would incur scandal and damnation. Moreover, everyone used to be able to see and recognize a monk by his habit.

However, contrary to that excellent arrangement, a detestable abuse has now sprung up in many places. Abbots dwell more frequently in their own castles or wherever they like, whether in the city or outside it. This is why it is now painful to visit monasteries. Very few monks show up in the choir at the time for the divine office, and sometimes none at all. There are few readings, and sometimes no chants, and many days masses are not even said. Good people are disturbed by the bad reputation of the monks, and bad people are made much worse by contact with them. Furthermore,

it is to be feared that few souls receive any alleviation of their punishments from the prayers of such as these.

Many monks live in town. Some of these have their own homes, and when their friends come to visit, they pick up their own children with a joyful hug, saying: "Here's my son!" A monk can scarcely be recognized nowadays in habit. The cloak that used to reach down to the feet now scarcely covers the knees. The long sleeves, which used to be decently wide, are now tight fitting and crimped. A sword hangs at their side instead of a stylus and writing tablets.

Hardly a single garment can be found on them to denote a monk, except for a scapular, which is often hidden from view as though it were some kind of scandal to be wearing a monkish garment. It does not even embarrass some of them to have a coat of mail and other weapons beneath their cloaks so that they can do what they like after their drinking-bouts.

There have been saints who gave up great wealth and started monastic orders based on poverty, who practiced contempt toward any kind of cupidity and, consequently, did not wish to have anything of their own. They abhorred all kinds of conceit and worldly pomp. They dressed in the poorest of clothes, utterly detesting the concupiscence of the flesh, and thus maintaining their purity of life. They and their followers are called mendicant friars, and the Roman pontiffs confirmed their rules with joy, seeing that they wanted to follow such a way of life for the glory of God and the benefit of souls. Yet it is a sorrow to behold even their rules now converted into detestable occasions of abuse and scarcely observed in the way that Augustine, Dominic, and Francis prescribed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rules faithfully observed by many a wealthy nobleman for such a long time!

To be sure, as rumor now has it, there are many men called wealthy who, as far as valuables and money are concerned, are poorer than those who have taken a vow of poverty. Thus, most of them have their own possessions, which their rule forbids, and find greater joy in their accursed property than in holy and glorious poverty. They pride themselves,

moreover, on having as expensive and precious material in their habits as found in the vestments of wealthy bishops.

Furthermore, blessed Gregory and other saints had convents built in which women could live in such seclusion that they were hardly to be seen even in daytime. Now, however, there is so much abuse in the convents that their doors are kept open for clerics and laymen alike, whomever it pleases the sisters to let in, even at night. Accordingly, such places are more like brothels than holy cloisters.

It also used to be the church's rule that no one was to receive money for hearing confessions, although, as was only just, penitentiaries were allowed to accept money from persons in need of testimonial letters. A contrary abuse has now arisen according to which rich persons offer however much they like, once they have made their confession, while poor people, before their confession is heard, are forced by the penitentiary to come to an agreement. Indeed, when penitentiaries give oral absolution, they are not ashamed to take money in their hands and put it in their pockets.

It was likewise established in the church? That at least once a year every person should confess his or her sins and receive the body of Christ. This applied to lay people, because clerics and religious did this more often during the year. Second, it was established that people unable to practice continence should live in matrimony. A third rule was that, with the exception of those who were seriously ill or in great difficulties, all Christians were to fast during Lent and on ember days and the vigils of other feast days, which are still well enough known to almost everybody. The fourth rule was that everyone was to abstain from any kind of worldly labor on feast days. The fifth was that no Christian should make financial or any other kind of profit through usury.

Contrary to these five excellent statutes, there have arisen five immoral and seriously harmful abuses. The first is that for every one person who goes to confession and receives the body of Christ, not counting priests, religious, and certain women, there are one hundred who

come of age and die here in Rome without ever having gone to confession or received the body of Christ any more often than genuine idolaters. The second abuse is that many men take legally wedded wives, but, if they have a disagreement with them, they abandon them for as long as they like, without the requisite authorization from the church, and take mistresses in their wives' place, loving them and holding them in honor. Some of them do not even shrink from keeping a mistress in the same house as their wife, but rather rejoice to hear them both giving birth at the same time.

The third abuse is that many people in good health eat meat during Lent and very few are content with one meal a day. Some, too, are found who do abstain from meat and eat Lenten fare during the day but indulge themselves with meat at night in secret taverns.

Indeed, sometimes clerics do this together with laymen. They are just like the Saracens who fast by day and indulge themselves with meat at night. The fourth abuse is that, while some laborers do abstain from work on feast days, there are wealthy men who do not leave off sending their hired hands to work in the vineyards, plow the fields, cut down trees in the woods, and carry the wood home on feast days. In this way, poor people enjoy no more quiet rest on feast days than on workdays. The fifth abuse is that Christians practice usury just' like the Jews, and, in fact, Christian usurers are greedier than Jewish ones.

Further, it was the custom of the church to bring such people as described above into line by means of anathema, but, contrary to this, the following abuse has now arisen. There are, namely, a great number of people who are no more afraid of being condemned than they are of being commended. Even if they know that they have been publicly excommunicated, they do not even bother to avoid entering the church or other dealings and conversations with people. In fact, few priests forbid excommunicates from going into a church. Few as well shun dealings and conversations with excommunicates, if they are bound to them by any kind of friendship. Nor is sacred burial denied to excommunicated people, if they are rich.

Accordingly, Reverend Sir, do not be surprised if I have described the city of Rome as unhappy due to such abuses and many others opposed to ecclesiastical statutes. Hence, it is to be feared that the Catholic faith will soon perish, unless some such man arrives who, with a real and not a counterfeit faith, loves God above all things and his neighbor as himself and abolishes all these abuses. Have compassion, then, on the church and on those of her clergy who love God wholeheartedly and abhor all these wicked customs. They have been like orphans due to the pope's absence, but they have defended the see of their father like sons and have wisely opposed the traitors, persevering in the midst of much hardship.

The bride's vision about various punishments being prepared for a certain soul as yet alive in body, and about how all these kinds of punishments, if his soul should be converted before death, would be converted into the greatest honor and glory.

Chapter 34

“It seemed to me that I saw some people standing around getting ropes ready, while some were standing and getting horses ready, and others were busy forging tongs or constructing a gallows. While I was looking at all this, a maiden appeared who seemed to be troubled. She asked if I understood it all. When I answered that I did not understand, she said: ”All this that you see is the spiritual punishment being prepared for the soul of that man whom you know. The ropes are for tying to the horse that will drag his soul. The tongs are for tearing his nose, eyes, ears, and lips off. The gallows is for hanging him.”

Since I was upset over this, the maiden told me: ”Do not be upset. There is still time. If he wants, he will be able to break the ropes, knock down the horses, melt the tongs like wax, and remove the gallows. Moreover, he can obtain such an ardent love of God that these symbols of punishments will become for him the highest marks of honor, so much so that the ropes that were to bind him in contempt will be turned into belts of gold for him. Instead of the horses that were to drag him across the plains,

angels will be sent to escort him into the presence of God. Instead of the tongs with which he was to be terribly mutilated, his nostrils will be filled with a fine fragrance and his mouth with a fine taste, his eyes with the loveliest of sights, his ears with the most delightful of melodies.”

EXPLANATION

This man was a marshal of the king. He came to Rome with so much humility and contrition that he would frequently go around the stations with bared head, praying to God and getting others to pray that he would not return to his country if that meant a relapse into his former sins. God heard his petition. When he left Rome and came to Montefiascone, he fell ill and died there.

Another revelation also concerns him: ”Daughter, see what God's mercy accomplishes, what a good intention accomplishes. This soul was in the jaws of the lion, but his good intention snatched him away from the lion's teeth, and he is now on the way to the homeland, and he will partake of all the goods that occur in the church of God.”

The bride's words to Jesus Christ about her desire for the salvation of souls, and the answer given her through the Holy Spirit, namely that people's excesses and superfluity in food and drink are an obstacle to the visitations of the Holy Spirit given to them.

Chapter 35

“O sweet Jesus, creator of all that has been created! Would that these people knew and understood the warmth of your Holy Spirit! Then they would long more for heaven and abhor the things of the earth. An answer immediately came to me in spirit, saying: ”Their excesses and superfluity are an obstacle to the visitations of the Holy Spirit. You see, excesses in food and drink and in banqueting with friends prevent both the Holy Spirit from becoming sweet to them and their having had enough of worldly pleasure. Excess of gold and silver, equipment, clothing, and income

prevent the spirit of my love from inflaming and kindling their hearts. Excess of servants and horses and animals are an obstacle to the approach of the Holy Spirit. No, indeed, they withdraw themselves from their servants, my angels, while their betrayers, the devils, draw near to them. They are therefore ignorant of the sweetness and the visitation by which I, who am God, visit holy souls and my friends.”

God's words to the bride about how the religious used to enter monasteries out of holy fear and divine charity, but now God's enemies, that is, false religious, go off into the world out of wicked pride and cupidity; similarly, about knights and their knightly service.

Chapter 36

“Hear now what my enemies do as opposed to what my friends once did. My friends used to enter monasteries out of wise fear and divine charity. But those who are now in the monasteries go off into the world out of pride and cupidity, following their selfish will and living for the pleasures of their body. The judgment for those who die with such a disposition is that they shall neither experience nor obtain heavenly joy but only endless punishment in hell. Know, too, that those who live in a cloister but are forced by divine charity and against their own will to become superiors shall not be counted in that number. Knights, moreover, who used to bear arms, were prepared to give their lives for justice and to shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith by helping the needy to obtain justice and by restraining evildoers and keeping them humble.

Yet, now hear how far they have turned away. Nowadays they prefer to die in war for the sake of pride and cupidity and envy, on the promptings of the devil, rather than to live according to my commands in order to obtain everlasting joy. Therefore, the wages of a just condemnation shall be given to all those who die with such a disposition. This means that devils will be given to their souls to be eternally joined with them as their wages. However, those who do serve me are to receive

their soldier's wages together with the heavenly army forever without end.”

Christ's words to the bride asking her how it stands with the world, and she answers that it is like an open sack to which everyone senselessly runs, and about Christ's severe and just condemnation of such people.

Chapter 37

The Son speaks: "Daughter, how stands the world now?" She answers: "Like an open sack to which everyone runs, like a man running without caring what he is following." The Lord answers: "Therefore, I am right to go with my plow over the earth, plowing over Gentiles and Christians, sparing neither old nor young, neither poor nor rich. Each shall be judged according to his or her own righteousness, and each shall die in his or her own sin, and their homes shall be left without inhabitants. However, I shall not do this until the consummation."

She replied: "O Lord, do not get angry if I speak. Send some of your friends to warn and admonish them about their danger!" And the Lord said: "It is written that when the rich man despaired of his own salvation in hell, he asked that someone might be sent to warn his brothers so that they would not perish in the same way. The answer to him was: 'That shall in no way be done, for they have Moses and the prophets to teach them.' So I tell you now: They have the Gospels and the sayings of the prophets, they have the words and examples of the holy doctors, they have reason and intelligence. Let them make use of these things, and they will be saved. If I send you, you would not be able to cry out loud enough to be heard. If I send my friends, there are but few of them, and if they cry out, they will scarcely be heard.

However, I will send my friends to those I choose, and they shall prepare the way for God."

Jesus Christ's words to the bride about not putting trust in dreams but, rather, being wary of them, no matter how happy or sad they are, and about how the devil mixes falsehoods with truth in dreams, because of which many errors occur in the world, and about how the prophets did not err, because they truly loved God above all things.

Chapter 38

The Son speaks: "Why do happy dreams lift you up so much? And why do sad dreams depress you so? Did I not tell you that the devil is envious and can accomplish no more without God's permission than a piece of straw beneath your feet? I also told you that he is the father and inventor of lies and that he mixes some truth in with all his falsehoods. I tell you, accordingly, that the devil never sleeps but goes around looking for an occasion to ensnare you.

You must therefore be careful so that the devil does not deceive you, using his subtle knowledge to discover your inner states by means of your outer movements. Sometimes he induces happy moods into your heart to make you feel empty joy; at other times he gives you sad ones to make you omit in your sorrow the good deeds that you could do and to make you sad and wretched before anything sad has occurred.

Sometimes the devil also puts a great many falsehoods into the kind of deluded heart that desires worldly esteem and so deceives many people, such as false prophets. This happens to people who love other things more than God. This is why it happens that a lot of truth is found in the midst of a great many false words, for the devil could never deceive anyone if he did not mix some truth in with the falsehood, as was clear in the case of the man you saw in a seizure. Although he was confessing that there is one God, his indecent gestures and strange words showed that the devil was possessing him and dwelling in him.

Now, however, you might ask: Why do I permit the devil to lie? I answer: I have permitted and do permit this due to the sins of the people and of the priests who have wanted to know things that God did not want

them to know, who desired success in areas where God saw that it was not beneficial to their salvation. Thus, it is because of sins that God permits many things to occur that would not occur if humankind had not abused grace and reason. Those prophets who longed for nothing but God and did not wish to speak God's words except for God's sake, these did not fall victims to deception but spoke and loved the words of truth.

Yet, as not all dreams should be welcomed, so not all dreams should be rejected, since God sometimes reveals good things in dreams, including the hour of their death to bad people in order that they might repent of their sins.

Sometimes he also reveals good things to good people in order that they might make greater progress toward God. So, whenever and as often as such things occur to you, do not lay them to heart but ponder them and study them with your wise spiritual friends, or else dismiss them and shut them out of your heart as if you had not seen them, because people who delight in such things are very often fooled and become disturbed. So, be firm in your faith in the Holy Trinity, love God with your whole heart, be obedient in failure as well as in success, do not think yourself better than anyone but tremble even when you do good, do not trust your own sense more than others but entrust your entire will to God, ready to do everything God wants. Then you will not need to be afraid of dreams. If they are happy dreams, do not trust or desire them without considering God's glory in them; if they are sad, do not be saddened but place yourself entirely in God's hands.”

The Mother says then: ”I am the Mother of mercy. I get the clothes ready for my daughter while she sleeps; I get food ready for my daughter while she gets dressed; I get a crown and every good reward ready for my daughter while she is working.”

The Mother's words to the Son about the bride, and Christ's answer to his Mother. Then the Mother's words about what is meant by the lion and the lamb, and about how God permits some things to happen because of human ingratitude and impatience that otherwise would not happen to them.

Chapter 39

The Mother speaks to her Son Jesus, saying: "Our daughter is like a lamb that puts its head in the lion's mouth." The Son answers her: "It is better for the lamb to put its head in the lion's mouth and become one flesh and one blood with the lion than that the lamb should suck blood from the lion's flesh and make the lion angry and then the lamb, whose food is hay, would get sick. Yet, my dear Mother, since you bore all wisdom and the fullness of all intelligence in your womb, get her to understand the meaning of the lion and of the lamb."

The Mother answers: "Blessed are you, my Son, who, while remaining eternally with the Father, came down to me, yet never separating yourself from the Father. It is you who are the lion of Judah's tribe. You are the lamb without stain whom John pointed out with his finger. A person puts her head into the lion's mouth when she entrusts her whole will to God and has no intention of carrying out her own will, even if she is able, unless she knows that it is pleasing to you.

A person sucks the lion's blood when she becomes impatient with the plan of your justice, wishing and striving to obtain other things than those that you have decided for her, or when she wants to live in a state of life other than that the one that is pleasing to you and beneficial for herself. God is not pleased with such desires but rather provoked to anger. Just as the lamb feeds on hay, so too a person should be satisfied with humble conditions and a lowly state in life. It is because of human ingratitude and impatience that God allows many things to occur for the salvation of humankind that would not happen if people were more patient.

Therefore, my daughter, give your will to God. If sometimes you feel less patient, begin all over again through penance, for penance works like a good washerwoman does on stains, and contrition is like a good bleacher."

Christ's words to the bride explaining the meaning of a Christian death and in what way a person dies well or badly, and about how the friends of God should not be troubled if they see God's servants dying a harsh bodily death.

Chapter 40

The Son speaks: "Do not be afraid, daughter: This sick woman will not die, for her works are pleasing to me." When the woman did die, the Son said again: "Do you see, daughter? What I told you was true: The woman is not dead, for her glory is great. The separation of body and soul is for the righteous no more than a dream, for they wake up to life eternal. That which should be called death is when the soul lives separated from the body in an eternal death.

There are many people who, while not mindful of the life to come, do wish to die a Christian death. Now, what does a Christian death mean, if not to die as I died: innocently, willingly, and patiently? Am I then contemptible because my death was contemptible and harsh? Or are my chosen ones foolish, because they had to bear contemptible sufferings? Or was this the will of fortune or did the movement of the stars cause it? Of course not. I and my chosen ones did indeed suffer harshly, but in order to show by word and example that the way to heaven is difficult, and in order to make people realize fully how necessary purification is for the wicked, seeing that the innocent elect suffered so greatly.

Know, then, that a person dies a contemptible and evil death when he dies while living a dissolute life and with the intention of sinning, when he has worldly success and desires to live for a long time but does not remember to give thanks to God. A person lives and dies happily who loves God with his whole heart, though he may be struck down by a despicable death or afflicted by a chronic illness, because his harsh death lessens his sins as well as the punishment for sin and increases his reward.

Look, I will remind you of two men, both of whom died a despicable and bitter death according to human opinion. Yet, if they had not received

such a death through my great mercy, they would not have been saved. However, because the Lord does not twice smite the contrite of heart, both of them attained their crown.

This is why the friends of God should not be saddened if they suffer violent temporal pain or die a bitter death. It is a blessed thing to weep for a time and to be troubled in this world so as not to come to the heaviest purgatory, where there will be no escape and no more time for working.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how priests with lawful faculties of absolution, no matter what kind of sinners they themselves are, are able to absolve from sins; the same applies to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Chapter 41

The Mother speaks: ”Go to him who has the faculty of absolution. No matter how leprous the doorkeeper is, he can still open the door as well as a healthy man, provided he has the keys. It is the same with absolution and the sacrament of the altar. No matter who the minister is, provided he has a lawful faculty of absolution, he can absolve from sins. Therefore, no priest is to be rejected.

However, I would forewarn you about two things. The first is that he will not get what he so longs for in the flesh. The other is that his life will soon be cut short. Just as an ant that carries its load of grain day and night sometimes falls down and dies right when it gets close to the nest, and the grain remains outside it, so too, right when this man has begun to reach the goal of his efforts, he will die and be punished, and his empty efforts will come to naught.”

The Mother's words to the daughter describing good character and righteous works in God's friends as door posts; and about how God's servants should stay away from disparagement.

Chapter 42

The Mother speaks: "God's friends are said to be like two door posts through which others can enter. Therefore, one must guard carefully against anything rough or hard or any other kind of obstacle getting in the way of those going in. These door posts symbolize nothing other than the moral composure and righteous works and edifying words that should be found everyday in the lives of God's friends. One must therefore guard attentively against anything hard, that is, disparaging or coarse speech, being found in the mouths of God's friends, or any worldly tendencies noticeable in their actions that may cause those seeking entrance to run away and shudder to enter there."

The Mother's words to the daughter likening bad pastors to a worm gnawing away at the roots of a tree.

Chapter 43

The Mother speaks: "They are like a worm that sees excellent seed but does not care how much fruit is lost or falls off, so long as it can tear away at the roots or the parts closest to the ground. In the same way, these men do not care that souls are being lost, so long as they can get their profits and earthly possessions. The justice of my Son will therefore come upon them, and they shall soon be taken away." She replies: "All the time that for us seems long is no more than the least grain of the balance before God. Your Son's patience with evildoers is great indeed." The Mother replies: "I tell you truly: Their judgment shall not be delayed but shall come to them with horror, and they shall be dragged away from pleasure into shame."

Christ's words to the bride likening the body to a ship and the world to the sea, and about how free will can lead souls to heaven or to hell, and the comparison of earthly beauty to a glass.

Chapter 44

The Son speaks: "Listen, you who long for the harbor after the storms of this world. Whoever is at sea has nothing to fear so long as that person stays there with him who can stop the winds from blowing, who can order any bodily harm to go away and the rocky crags to soften, who can command the storm-winds to lead the ship to a restful harbor. So it is in the physical world.

There are those who lead the body like a ship across the waters of the world, bringing some people consolation but others distress, for human free will leads some souls to heaven, others to the depths of hell. The human will is pleasing to God when it desires to hear nothing more fervently than God's praise nor to live for anything other than God's service, for God dwells happily in such a will and lightens every danger and smoothes away all the crags by which the soul is often endangered.

What do these rocky crags represent if not evil desire? It is delightful to see and own worldly possessions, to rejoice in the elegance of one's body and to taste whatever delights the flesh. Such things often endanger the soul. But when God is on board the ship, all these things grow weak, and the soul scorns them all, for all bodily and earthly beauty is like a glass that is painted on the outside but full of earth on the inside. When the glass gets broken, it is no more useful than the dark soil of the earth, which has been created for no other purpose than to be used, if one owns any, in order to gain heaven. All those people who no more desire to hear of their own or the world's esteem than they do the noxious air, those who mortify every limb of their body and hate the abominable lust of their flesh, all these can rest here in quiet and wake up with joy, because God is with them at all times."

The bride's lamentation before the divine majesty, because the four sisters, Humility, Abstinence, Contentment, and Charity, daughters of Jesus Christ the King, are now,

alas, regarded as worthless, and the sisters Pride, Desire, Excess, and Simony, daughters of King Devil, are now called noblewomen.

Chapter 45

I make my complaint, not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of many of God's elect, before your Majesty, concerning the plight of four sisters, daughters of a mighty king, each of whom held position and power within her inherited estate. All those who wished to look on the beauty of these sisters received solace from their beauty and good example from their piety. The first sister was called Humility in managing every deed to be done. The second sister was called Abstinence from all sinful intercourse. The third sister was called Contentment without any excess. The fourth sister was called Charity regarding the affliction of one's neighbors. These four sisters are now regarded as worthless on their own inherited estate and scorned by almost everyone.

In their place four other, illegitimate sisters have been installed. Though they are the offspring of a fornicator, they are now called noblewomen. The first of these is Lady Pride, who lives to please the world. The second is called Lady Desire, who follows the body's every appetite. The third is called Lady Excess beyond the limits of necessity. The fourth is called Lady Simony, against whose deception almost nobody can protect himself, since, whether things are rightly or wrongly acquired, she greedily takes it all in. These four ladies contradict the precepts of God, wishing to render them worthless, and they are an occasion of eternal damnation to many souls.

Therefore, act in accordance with the love that God has shown you, and swiftly help to raise up the four sisters called virtues, which proceed from the very virtue of Jesus Christ the high king, and which have now been laid low in the Holy Church, the inherited estate of Christ. Lay low instead the vices that are called ladies in this world, the traitors of souls, born of that traitor the devil, vice itself.

The bride's warning to a certain nobleman about restoring unjustly acquired property, and about the voice of an angel announcing a harsh sentence against him.

Chapter 46

Sir, I warn you about the danger your soul is in, and remind you that we read about a certain king in the Old Testament who felt a desire for another man's vineyard and offered him the full price for it. However, since the owner did not want to sell it, the king was angered and unjustly expropriated it for himself with violence. The Holy Spirit spoke to him a little later through the mouth of a prophet, sentencing the king and queen to die a wretched death for their injustice. The prophecy was fulfilled in them, and their children had not the least benefit of the possession of that vineyard.

Now, then, since you are Christian and keep the whole faith and know with certainty that God is the same now in his power and justice as he was then, you ought to know, accordingly, that, if you have a desire to possess something unjustly, either by forcing the owner to sell it against his will or by not making a fair offer, that same powerful and just judge will be the avenger. You, moreover, should fear for such a sentence overtaking you as is said to have befallen that queen. You should sorrow that your children will not be made rich by your ill-gotten goods but will rather suffer the distress of poverty.

By the passion of Jesus Christ, who redeemed your soul with his precious blood, I exhort and admonish you not to destroy your soul for the sake of fleeting possessions but to make full restitution to all those who have suffered loss at your hands or because of you. Restore whatever you have wrongly acquired both to relieve those who now suffer sorrow and as an example for others, if you want to gain the friendship of God.

God is my witness that I do not write you this on my own, for I do not know you, but because something happened to a person that compelled me

to write out of holy compassion for your soul. For that person, not asleep but awake in prayer, heard the voice of an angel saying: "Björn, Björn, how overbold you are toward God and toward justice! Your willpower has so overcome the conscience within you that your conscience is completely silent, while your will speaks and acts. That is why you shall soon come to judgment in the divine court. Your will shall then be silent, and your conscience shall speak and condemn you in accordance with right justice."

The Son's words to the bride about how we ought to beware of temptations from the devil, and his description of the devil as an enemy of the state, and of God as a mother hen, his power and wisdom as wings, his mercy as feathers, and the people as chickens.

Chapter 47

The Son speaks: "If the enemy is battering at the city gates, you should not be like goats that run toward the wall or like rams that rear themselves up on their hind legs and butt against each other with their horns. Instead you should be like chickens that see a bird of prey in the sky aiming to harm them and take refuge beneath the wings of their mother and hide there. They are happy even if they only get hold of a single one of the mother's feathers and take cover there.

Who is your enemy if not the devil, who looks maliciously upon every good deed and is wont to batter and agitate the human mind with temptations? Sometimes he batters it with anger and slander, sometimes with impatience and criticism toward God's decisions whenever things do not turn out as one wishes. Very often he batters and upsets you with innumerable thoughts in order to draw you away from God's service and cast a shadow over your good works before God.

Therefore, no matter what temptations you have, you should not abandon your position nor be like the goats that run up toward the wall, that is, to be hard of heart, or to criticize other people's actions in your hearts, since a person who is bad today is often good tomorrow. Rather,

you should lower your horns, stand still, and listen, that is, humble yourselves and be fearful, patiently entreating God so that bad beginnings may be changed into a happy ending. Nor should you be like the rams brandishing their horns, that is, paying back insult with insult and adding taunt to taunt.

Rather you should stand steadily on your feet and remain silent, that is, check your passions, so that in your speech and responses you may show forethought and patient forcefulness, because the righteous man overcomes himself and restrains himself even from licit remarks in order to avoid loquacity and offensiveness. When a person is agitated in mind and lets go of everything he feels inside, he seems somehow to have vindicated himself and revealed the instability of his mind. This is the reason why he will be left without a reward, because he was unwilling to be patient for a time. Had he been patient, he would both have won over his offending brother and fitted himself for a greater reward.

What do the hen's wings represent if not divine power and wisdom? You see, I am like a hen that powerfully protects from the snares of the devil those chickens that run to me when I call, that is, those who desire the shade of my wings, and I summon them to salvation through my wise inspirations. What does the feather represent if not my mercy? One who obtains my mercy can feel as secure as a chicken sheltered beneath its mother's wings. So, be like the chickens running toward my will. In all temptations and adversities say both out loud and in your deeds: May God's will be done! For, I protect those who trust in me with my power; I refresh them with my mercy; I hold them with my patience; I visit them with my solace; I enlighten them with my wisdom; I reward them a hundredfold with my love.”

The Son's words to the bride about a king and how he should work to increase God's honor and love for souls, and about his sentencing, if he fails to do so.

Chapter 48

The Son speaks: "If this man wishes to honor me, let him first work to reduce my dishonor and increase my honor. My dishonor consists in the contempt shown for the commandments that I have commanded and the words that I have personally spoken, which are completely disregarded by almost everyone. If he wishes to love me, then let him from now on show greater charity toward all souls for whom I opened up heaven with my heart's blood. If he longs to rest with God more than to enlarge his inheritance, then he will surely find greater desire as well as help from God in order to win back that place, Jerusalem, where my dead body lay.

Tell him, you who are hearing this: I, God, allowed him to be crowned king. This is why it is especially his duty to follow my will and to love and honor me above all things. If he fails to do so, his days will be cut short. Moreover, those people who are emotionally attached to him will be painfully separated from him, and his kingdom will be divided into several parts."

The bride's symbolic vision of the church, its explanation, which concerns the moderation and attitude that the pope ought to maintain regarding his own person and regarding the cardinals and other prelates of Holy Mother Church, and especially about the attitude of humility.

Chapter 49

It seemed to a certain person that she was in a large chancel, and a great, shining sun appeared. There were two pulpits, as it were, in the chancel, one to the right and the other to the left, with a long space intervening between them and the sun. Two rays of the sun fell upon the pulpits.

Then a voice was heard from the pulpit on the left side, saying: "Hail, eternal king, creator and redeemer, and just judge! Behold, your vicar, who is seated on your chair in the world, has now brought his chair back to its ancient and earlier place, where sat the first pope, Peter, prince of the

apostles.” A voice from the pulpit on the right replied, saying: ”How can he enter into the Holy Church when the barrels of the door hinges are full of rust and dirt? This is why the doors are inclining toward the ground, because there is no room in the barrels to receive the hinge-pins that should be supporting the doors. The pins have been completely bent outward and are not at all curved in such a way as to hold the doors in place. The floor is all dug up and has been converted into pits as deep as bottomless wells. The ceiling is smeared with pitch and burning with sulphurous flames, dripping down like dense rain. Thick, black fumes arising from the pits and the dripping of the ceiling have stained all the walls and made their color as ugly to look at as gory blood and pus. It is therefore not fitting for God's friend to have his dwelling in such a temple.”

The voice from the left replied, saying: ”Give a spiritual explanation of what you have described physically.” The other voice then said: ”The pope is symbolized and represented by the doors; the barrels of the door hinges signify humility. This should be empty of all pride so that nothing is to be seen there except what pertains to the humble office of pontiff, just as the barrel should be completely empty of any rust. However, the barrels, that is, the insignia of humility, are now so full of excess and wealth and resources - kept for no other purpose than pride - that nothing seems humble, since all his humility has been converted into worldly pomp. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pope, represented by the doors, is inclining toward worldliness, as symbolized by the rust and the dirt. Accordingly, let the pope begin with true humility in himself: first of all, in his trappings - his clothes, his gold, silver, and vessels of silver, his horses and other equipment - getting rid of everything but what is necessary, and donating the rest to the poor and, especially, to those whom he knows to be friends of God.

Let him then organize his entourage with moderation and keep only those servants needed to protect him. Although it is in God's hands to call him to judgment, still it is only right for him to have servants both in order to strengthen the cause of justice and so that he can humble those who rebel against God and against the holy customs of the church.

The hinge-pins attached to the doors represent the cardinals who have been bent outward and stretched as far as possible toward all pride, greed, and physical pleasure. This is why the pope should take a hammer and tongs in hand and bend the hinges to his will by not letting them have more clothes, servants, and equipment than necessity and utility require. Let him bend them with the tongs, that is, with his soothing words and divine counsel and fatherly love. Then, if they refuse to obey, he should take the hammer and display severity toward them, doing with them whatever lies in his power and does not go against justice, until they are bent to his will.

The floor represents the bishops and the secular clergy, whose greed is bottomless. From their pride and luxurious way of living come the fumes that make all the angels in heaven and all God's friends on earth shun them.

The pope can improve the situation greatly by allowing them to have only what they need and nothing superfluous, and he should order each bishop to watch over the ways of his own clergy. Anyone who refuses to mend his ways and live continently should be stripped of his prebends, because God would rather not have a mass said in a given place than let a whorish hand touch the body of God.”

The bride's unfathomable vision of the judgment of a multitude of persons still in life, in which she heard: "If people would rectify their sins, I, too, will lighten their sentence."

Chapter 50

It seemed to me as though a king was seated on a judgment seat, and each living person stood before him. Each person had two beings standing next to him, one of whom appeared like an armed soldier, the other like a black Ethiopian. A pulpit stood before the judgment seat. On it lay a book,

arranged in the same way as I saw earlier when I saw three kings standing before him. It seemed to me that the whole world was standing before the pulpit. Then I heard the judge saying to the armed soldier: "Call those whom you have served with love!"

Those who were named fell down immediately. Some of them lay there for a longer while, others for a shorter, before their souls were separated from the body. I am unable to grasp everything I heard and saw then, for I heard the sentences of many people still living but who will soon be called. However, the following was said to me by the judge: "If people would rectify their sins, I, too, will lighten their sentence." Then I saw many people being sentenced, some to purgatory, others to everlasting woe.

The bride's admirable and terrible vision about a soul led before the judge, and about the arguments of God and the book's judgment against the soul and the soul's evidence against herself, and about the various astounding punishments inflicted on her in purgatory.

Chapter 51

It seemed that I saw a soul being led to the judge by the soldier and the Ethiopian whom I had seen earlier. It was said to me: "What you now see all took place in regard to that soul when she was released from the body." Once the soul had been escorted into the presence of the judge, she stood there alone, no longer in the hands of either of her escorts. She stood there naked and sorrowful, not knowing to what place she would come. It seemed to me then that every word in the book gave its own answer to each and every thing the soul was saying.

In the hearing of the judge and of the entire host, the armed soldier spoke first, saying: "It is not right to bring up as a reproach against this soul the sins for which she has made reparation in confession." I beheld all this but realized then quite well that the soldier who was speaking already had knowledge of everything in God but spoke so that I would understand.

A reply then came from the book of justice: "Although this soul did perform penance, it was not accompanied by a contrition or true satisfaction proportionate to her great sins. She should therefore suffer now for those sins for which she did not make reparation when she was able."

When this was said, the soul began to weep so violently that it was as though she had broken down completely, and yet, though her tears could be seen, not a sound could be heard. Then the King said to the soul: "Let your conscience now declare those sins that were not accompanied by a proportionate satisfaction." Then the soul raised her voice with such force that it was as though it could be heard throughout the whole world. She said: "Woe is me that I did not act according to God's commands, which I heard and knew!" Then she added in self-accusation: "I did not fear God's judgment." The book replied to her: "You must therefore now fear the devil." Right away the soul began to fear and tremble, as if she were melting away completely, and she said: "I had almost no love for God: That is why I did so little good." An immediate reply was made to her from the book: "That is why it is just for you to approach closer to the devil than to God, because the devil lured and enticed you to himself with his temptations."

The soul replied: "I understand now that everything I did was done on the promptings of the devil." A reply was made from the book: "Justice dictates that it is the devil's right to repay your accomplishments with pain and punishment." The soul said: "From head to heel there was nothing I did not dress with pride. Some of my vain and proud manners I invented myself, others I just followed according to the custom of my native land. I washed my hands and face not only in order to be clean but also to be called beautiful by men." A reply was made from the book: "Justice says that it is the devil's right to repay you for what you have earned, since you dressed and adorned yourself as he inspired and told you to do."

The soul said again: "My mouth was often open for bawdy talk, because I wanted to please others, and my heart longed for all those things provided it did not result in worldly disgrace or disapproval." A reply was made from the book: "That is why your tongue must be drawn out and

stretched and your teeth bent in. And all the things you most detest will be set before you, and all the things you like will be taken away from you.” The soul said: ”I enjoyed it immensely when many people took after my example and noticed what I did and copied my manners.” A reply was made from the book: ”Hence, it is just that everyone caught in the sin for which you are about to be punished should also suffer the same punishment and be brought to you. Then your pain will be increased each time someone comes who copied your fashions.”

After these words, it seemed to me as though a chain was wound about her head like a crown and then tightened so hard that the front and back of her head were joined together. Her eyes fell out of their sockets and dangled by their roots at her cheeks. Her hair looked like it had been scorched by flames, and her brains were shattered and flowed out through her nostrils and ears.

Her tongue was stretched out and her teeth pressed in. Her arms were twisted like ropes and their bones broke. Her hands, with their skin peeled off, were fastened to her throat. Her breast and belly were bound so hard with her back that her ribs were broken and her heart spilled out together with all her entrails; her thighs dangled at her flanks, and their broken bones were being pulled out just like a thin thread is used to thread a needle.

After this sight, the Ethiopian replied: ”O Judge, the soul's sins have now been punished according to justice. Now join the two of us, this soul and me, so that we may never be separated!” But the armed soldier replied: ”Hear, Judge, you who know all things! It concerns you now to hear the last thought and feeling that this soul had at the end of her life. At the very last moment she had the following thought: 'O, if God would only give me enough life, I would gladly make reparation for my sins and serve him all the rest of my lifetime and never more offend him.' O Judge, such were her last thoughts and wishes. Remember, too, Lord, that this person did not live long enough to acquire a fully understanding conscience. Therefore, Lord, think of her youth and treat her mercifully!”

A reply was then made from the book of justice: "Last thoughts such as these do not deserve hell." Then the judge said: "Because of my passion, let heaven be opened up for this soul once she has undergone purgation for her sins for as much time as she is bound to suffer, unless she receives assistance from the good works of others still alive."

EXPLANATION

This woman made a vow of virginity in the presence of a priest, and then married later on. She died giving birth.

The bride's terrible vision of a man and woman, and an angel's spiritual explanation to the bride concerning the amazing vision and containing many amazing points.

Chapter 52

There appeared to me a man whose eyes were dug out and hanging at his cheeks by their two muscles. He had the ears of a dog, the nostrils of a horse, the mouth of a ferocious wolf, hands like the feet of a big ox and feet like a vulture. I saw a woman standing at his side whose hair was like a bramble bush, whose eyes were at the back of her head, whose ears were cut off, whose nose was full of pus and gore, whose lips were like snakefangs with a venomous barb on her tongue, whose hands were like the tail of a fox, whose feet like two scorpions.

I was awake and not sleeping while I saw all this, and I said: "O, what is this?" Immediately a sweet-sounding voice spoke to me so comfortingly that all my fear disappeared. It said: "You who are seeing this, what do you think it is?" I answered: "I do not know whether the beings I see are devils or beasts born with such a bestial nature or human beings formed that way by God." The voice then answered me: "They are not devils, since devils do not have bodies as you see these do, nor are they a kind of beast, for they are born from Adam's stock, although they were not created in such a form by God. Rather, they appear before God made ugly in their souls by

the devil. It is this that you are seeing as if in bodily fashion, but I will reveal to you the spiritual meaning of it all.

You see the eyes of that man that look as though they were dug out and hanging by their two muscles. You should understand two things by the two muscles. The first is that he believed God to live eternally. The second is that he believed that his own soul would live on eternally for good or evil after the death of the body. You should understand two things by the two eyes. The first is that he should have considered how he could have avoided sin, and the second is how he could have carried out good deeds. These two eyes have been dug out in the sense that he did not do good deeds out of a desire for heavenly glory and did not flee sin out of the fear of the punishment of Gehenna. He has dog ears, because, as a dog is not as interested in his master's name or in any other dog's name so much as its own name, If he should hear it, so too this man did not care as much about the honor of God's name as about the honor of his own name.

He has a horse's nostrils, too, for, just as when a horse has got rid of its dung, it likes to put its nose to it, so does this man. When he has committed a sin, which before God is as vile a thing as dung, it seems pleasant to him to think on its stench. He has a mouth like a ferocious wolf that, although it has filled its mouth and belly with the things it has already seen, still longs to gobble up any living creature its ears detect.

He also has hands like the feet of a strong ox. An angry ox destroys a weaker animal through the force of its wrath by trampling it down with its hooves indiscriminately, flesh and intestines and all, until the last bit of life is taken away. This man does likewise. When he is angry, he treats his enemy indiscriminately, without a thought about how the man's soul might end up in hell or how his body will suffer in death, provided that he can take the man's life away. He has feet like a vulture. When a vulture gets something it likes in its claws, it squeezes it so tightly that the strength in its feet fails due to the pain and it lets go of what it was holding without even knowing it. This man acts in the same way. He intends to keep his unjust possessions until death, but he will be forced to let go of them when his strength fails.

His wife's hair was like a bramble bush. The hair on the top of the head that adorns a person's face signifies a will that highly desires to please God the most high. That is what adorns a soul in God's sight. Because this woman's will was highly set on pleasing the world rather than God the most high, her hair looks like a bramble bush. Her eyes appear to be at the back of her head, because she turned her mind's eye away from what God's goodness had done for her in creating and redeeming her and in providing for her in her needs. Yet she gazes intently on that which is fleeting, though these things are departing from her day by day and will vanish entirely from her sight in the end. Her ears appear to be cut off in a spiritual sense, for she cares little about the doctrine of the Holy Gospel or about hearing sermons.

Her nose is full of gore, because, just as a sweet odor is pleasantly transmitted to the brain through the nose so as to comfort it, so she, too, in her passions, is delighted to put into effect whatever delights her corruptible body in order to comfort it. Her lips are like snake-fangs, and there is a venomous barb on her tongue. Even when a snake holds its teeth together tightly so as to protect its barb from being accidentally broken, the filth of its mouth still flows out through the gaps between its teeth. In the same way, she shuts her lips to true confession so as not to break the pleasure of sin, which is like the venomous barb of her soul, but the filth of her sin can still be clearly seen in the sight of God and his saints.”

EXPLANATION

”I told you before about the judgment and rejection of a marriage that they had contracted against the statutes of the church. I shall now explain it to you more fully. You saw the woman's hands were like the tails of foxes and her feet like scorpions. This is because, just as she was undisciplined in her whole body and all her passions, so too by the lightness of her hands and her way of walking she excited her husband's physical delight and stung his soul worse than any scorpion.”

At that very moment an Ethiopian appeared with trident in hand and three sharp claws on his feet. He shouted and said: "Judge, it is my hour now. I have waited and been silent. Now is the time for action!" Immediately, I beheld a naked man and woman before the judge as he sat there together with his innumerable host.

The judge said to them: "Though I know all things, tell us what you have done!" The man answered: "We heard and knew about the ecclesial bond, and we paid no attention but disdained it." The judge answered: "Because you refused to follow the Lord, justice says you must experience the malice of the executioner." Right then the Ethiopian thrust his claws into their hearts and pressed them together so tightly that they looked like they were in a winepress. And the judge said: "Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they knowingly distance themselves from their creator for the sake of creation."

The judge spoke again to the two of them: "I gave you a sack to fill with the fruit of my delights. What, then, do you bring me?" The woman answered: "O judge, we sought the delights of our belly and have nothing to bring but shame." Then the judge said to the executioner: "Let them have their just reward!" And he immediately thrust his second claw into both their bellies and wounded them so badly that all their intestines appeared to be pierced through and through. The judge said: "Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they transgress the law and thirst after poison as though it were medicine."

The judge spoke again to the two of them: "Where is my treasure that I provided for your use?" Both of them answered: "We trampled it underfoot, for we sought an earthly treasure and not an eternal one." Then the judge said to the executioner: "Let them have what you must and can give to them!" He immediately thrust his third claw into their hearts and bellies and feet in such a way that everything seemed to be like one big ball. The Ethiopian said: "Lord, where shall I go with them?" The judge answered: "It is not for you to rise or rejoice." At that the man and woman disappeared with a wail from the face of the judge. The judge spoke again:

”Rejoice, daughter, because you have been kept apart from such creatures.”

The Virgin's words to the bride about how she is prepared to defend every widow and every virgin and every wife in whom she sees an upright intention and a love for her Son above all else.

Chapter 53

“Listen,” said God's Mother, ”you who are praying to God with your whole heart that your sons may be pleasing to him. Such a prayer truly does please God. There is not a mother who loves my Son above all else and who makes that same prayer to God for her children whom I am not at once prepared to help attain the object of her petition. Nor is there a widow who steadfastly asks for God's help to remain in the state of widowhood until her death for the glory of God whom I am not at once prepared to carry out her will along with her. I myself was like a widow in that I had a son on earth who did not have a father in the flesh. Likewise, there is no virgin yearning to preserve her virginity for God until death whom I am not prepared to defend and comfort, for I myself truly am a virgin.

You should not be wondering: Why am I saying this? It is written, you know, that David desired Saul's daughter when she was a virgin. Then he had the wife of Uriah while her husband was still alive. David's concupiscence was sinful, but the spiritual gratification of my Son, David's Lord, is free from all sin.

Accordingly, as these three states of life - virginity, widowhood, and matrimony - provided physical pleasure to David, so too it pleases my Son to keep them for his most chaste gratification in a spiritual sense. Thus, it is no wonder that I help to bring the spiritual gratification of these states of life to my Son to gratify him, for they do gratify him.”

The Mother's words to the bride about the happy spiritual birth of someone brought up in the worst kinds of sins and how it was obtained by the prayers and tears of God's servants.

Chapter 54

“See the son of tears who has recently been born of the world in a spiritual sense! He had been first physically born of his mother in the world. Just as when the woman who drew him forth from his mother's womb first drew out his head, then his hands, then his whole body until he fell onto the ground, I have done the same for him due to the tears and the prayers of my friends. I drew him forth from the world so that he is now spiritually like a newborn baby boy. Accordingly, he must be brought up both spiritually and bodily.

The man to whom I sent you must bring him up and protect him with his prayers and good deeds and counsels. The woman you were told about will pray for him and protect him spiritually and also attend to any bodily needs he may have, for he had fallen so deeply into mortal sins that all the devils in hell had been saying this about him: 'When he comes, let us open our mouths to crush him with our teeth and gobble him up. Let us reach out our hands to break and mangle him. Let our feet be ready to trample him down and kick him.'

This is why it was said to you that he had been born spiritually, because he has been freed from the power of the devils, as you could gather from the words you heard about how he loves God in his heart and body above all things.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how, due to the prayers of God's servants, she wants to love a certain boy and equip him with spiritual weapons.

Chapter 55

“Remember what is written about Moses: The king's daughter found him on the water and loved him as her own son. It is also written in the Scholastic History that the same Moses conquered his land by means of the birds that ate up the poisonous snakes. I am a king's daughter from the family of David, and I want to love this boy whom I found on a sea-swell of tears shed for the salvation of his soul. His soul was enclosed in the ark of his body that will be brought up by those I told you about until he reaches the age in which I want to equip him and send him to gain the land of the king of heaven. How this is to come about is unknown to you but known to me. I will prepare him in such a way that it will be said of him: 'He lived like a man and died like a champion. He came to his judgment like a good soldier.' ”

ADDITION

God's Son speaks: ”When a starving animal is driven away from its prey, it waits at a distance until it finds an opportunity to return to the prey. But, if it finds none, it goes back to its cave. I have dealt with the leader of this country in a similar way. I admonished him through my kindnesses, I admonished him with words and blows. Yet, the more meek and mild I have shown myself to him, the more thankless and negligent he has become. I shall therefore summon him now beneath the crown and to the footstool, since he refuses to stay crowned. Upon him and his yea-sayers I shall set a cruel asp born from a viper and from a sly fox in order to molest the nation and to pluck the feathers of the simpleminded. He will ascend the heights of nations and cast off the boastful and trample them down. However, I shall lead this boy, whom my friends will foster, along another road until he arrives at a place of greater glory.”

God's Son spoke again: ”It will, moreover, be said of this boy that, because he lived like a man and fought like an outstanding soldier, he shall be crowned as a friend of God. O, daughter, what are women thinking when they glory in their sons' progress in pride?

That is not glory but shame, for they are imitating the king of pride. Real glory is when he is a soldier of glory who glories in giving honor to God with all his might and strives for higher things and is ready to endure

whatever the Lord wants him to endure. Such a man is a soldier of God and will be crowned as such together with the soldiers of heaven.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about a man not being saddened because of a correction.

Chapter 56

The Mother speaks: ”Why is that man upset? A father sometimes deals his son light blows with a switch. He has no reason to be sad.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how Rome must first be cleansed of the tares with a sharp iron sickle, then with fire, then with a pair of oxen.

Chapter 57

The Mother speaks: ”Rome is like the field in which the tares had sprung up. It must first be cleansed with a sharp iron sickle, then purged with fire, and afterward plowed by a pair of oxen. I shall deal with you like a person transferring plants to a different place. A punishment is being prepared for this city, as if the judge were to say: 'Strip all its hide off, remove all the blood from its flesh, cut up all its meat into bits, and crush its bones so that all the marrow is drained off.' ”

Christ's figurative words to the bride, and their explanation in which Christ is described as a ruler on pilgrimage, his body as a treasure, the church as a house, priests as guardians. The true Lord has honored these priests with a sevenfold honor. Also about how God complains that wicked priests abuse him with a sevenfold abuse, and how they turn the seven vestments, which they should have, into seven vices.

Chapter 58

The Son speaks: "I am like a ruler who fought faithfully in the land of his pilgrimage, and returned with joy to the land of his birth. This ruler had a very precious treasure. At its sight, the bleary-eyed became clear-sighted, the sad were consoled, the sick regained their strength, the dead were raised. For the purpose of the safe and honest protection of this treasure, a splendid and magnificent house of suitable height was built and finished with seven steps leading up to it and the treasure. The ruler entrusted the treasure to his servants for them to watch over, manage, and protect faithfully and purely. This was in order that the ruler's love for his servants might be shown and that the servants' faithfulness toward the ruler might be seen.

As time went on, the treasure began to be despised and its house rarely visited, while the guardians grew lukewarm, and the love of the ruler was neglected. Then the ruler consulted his intimate advisers concerning what was to be done about such ingratitude, and one of them said in answer: 'It is written that the neglectful judges and guardians of the people were ordered to be hanged in the sun. However, mercy and judgment are your nature; you are lenient toward all, for all things are yours and you are merciful toward all.'

I am the ruler in the parable. I appeared like a pilgrim on earth by virtue of my humanity, although I was mighty in heaven and on earth by virtue of my divinity. I fought so hard on earth that all the muscles of my hands and feet were ruptured out of zeal for the salvation of souls. As I was about to leave the world and ascend into heaven, I left it a most worthy memorial, my most holy body, in order that, in the same way that the Old Law could glory in the ark, the manna, and the tablets of the covenant, and in other ceremonies, so the new man could rejoice in the New Law - not, as before, in a shadow but in the truth, indeed, in my crucified body that had been foreshadowed in the law. In order that my body might be given honor and glory, I established the house of the Holy Church, where it was to be kept and preserved, as well as priests to be its special guardians, who in a certain way are above the angels by reason of

their ministry. The one whom angels fear to touch due to a reverent fear, priests handle with their hands and mouth.

I honored the priests with a sevenfold honor, as it were, on seven steps. On the first step, they should be my standard-bearers and special friends by reason of the purity of their mind and body, for purity is the first position near to God, whom nothing foul can touch nor adorn. It was not strange that marital relation was permitted to the priests of the law during the time in which they were not offering sacrifice, for they were carrying the shell, not the nut itself. Now, however, with the coming of the truth and the disappearance of the figure, one must strive all the more fully for purity by as much as the nut is sweeter than the shell. As a sign of this kind of continence, first the hair is tonsured, so that desire for pleasure does not rule over spirit or flesh.

On the second step, the clerics are ordained in order that they may become angelic men in all humility, for heaven is attained and the devil's pride is overcome through humility of mind and body. As a sign of such a step, the clerics are authorized to cast out demons, for the humble man is raised up to heaven from where the lofty devil fell through his pride.

On the third step the clerics are ordained for the purpose of being disciples of God through the constant reading of Holy Scripture. For this reason, a book is placed in their hands by the bishops, just as a sword is given to a knight, so that they understand what they must do and strive through prayer and meditation to placate God's anger for the sake of the people of God.

On the fourth step the clerics are ordained as guardians of God's temple and watchmen of souls. For this reason, the bishops give them keys in order that they may be deeply concerned for the salvation of their brethren and encourage them by word and deed and incite the weak to greater perfection.

On the fifth step, they are ordained as stewards and caretakers of the altars and scornors of worldly things in order that they may serve at the

altar, live by the altar, and occupy themselves with earthly matters only insofar as befits their position.

On the sixth step, they are ordained to be apostolic men who preach the gospel truth and make their conduct fit their preaching.

On the seventh step, they are ordained to be mediators between God and man through the sacrifice of my body. In some way, at this point, priests rank above the angels in dignity.

My grievance now, however, is that these steps have fallen apart. Pride is loved more than humility, impurity is practiced instead of purity, the divine lessons are not read but the book of the world, negligence is to be seen at the altars, God's wisdom is regarded as foolishness, the salvation of souls is not a concern. As if this were not enough, they even throw away my vestments and scorn my weapons. On the mountain, I showed Moses the vestments that the priests of the law were to use. It is not as though there were anything material in God's heavenly dwelling, but it is because spiritual things cannot be understood except by means of physical symbols. Thus, I revealed a spiritual truth by means of something physical in order that people might realize how much reverence and purity are needful for those who have the truth itself - my body - given that those who were wearing but a shadow and a figure had so much purity and reverence.

Why did I reveal such magnificence in material vestments to Moses? It was, of course, in order to use them to teach and symbolize the magnificence and beauty of the soul. As the vestments of the priests were seven in number, so too the soul that approaches the body of God should have seven virtues without which there is no salvation. The first vestment of the soul, then, is contrition and confession. These cover the head. The second is desire for God and desire for chastity. The third is work in honor of God as well as patience in adversity. The fourth is caring neither for human praise nor reproach but for the honor of God alone. The fifth is abstinence of the flesh along with true humility. The sixth is consideration

of the favors of God as well as fear of his judgments. The seventh is love of God above all things and perseverance in good undertakings.

These vestments, however, have been changed and are now despised. People love to make excuses and smooth over their guilt instead of going to confession. They love constant lewdness instead of chastity. They love work for the benefit of the body instead of work for the salvation of the soul. They love worldly ambition and pride instead of the honor and love of God. They love all kinds of redundancy instead of praiseworthy thrift, presumption and criticizing God's judgments instead of the fear of God, and the clergy's thanklessness toward everyone instead of God's love toward all. Therefore, as I said through the prophet, I shall come in indignation, and tribulation shall give them understanding."

Then the Mother of Mercy, being present, replied: "Blessed are you, my son, for your justice. I am speaking to you who know all things for the sake of this bride. You want her to understand spiritual truths, but she is unable to grasp the spiritual meaning except by means of images. Before you received a human nature from me, you once spoke as God, saying that if ten righteous men could be found in the city, you would be willing to show mercy to the whole city for the sake of those ten. There still are countless priests who placate you with the offering of your body. Therefore, because of these priests, have mercy on those who have little good in them. This I beg, I who gave birth to you in your human nature. All your elect ask this together with me."

The Son answered: "Blessed are you and blessed is the word of your mouth! You see that I pardon in three ways because of the threefold good in the offering of my body. Three good things were revealed in me through the effrontery of Judas. In the same way three good things come to souls through the offering of this sacrifice. First, my patience is to be praised because, though I knew who my betrayer was, I did not reject his company. Second, my power was revealed when, in the presence of my betrayer, all those who were with him fell to the ground at a single word of mine. Third, the divine wisdom and love were manifested, since I

transformed all the wickedness of Judas and the devil into salvation for souls.

Similarly, three good things come from the offering of the priests. First, my patience is praised by all the heavenly host because I remain the same in the hands of good as well as of bad priests, and because there is no partiality in me, and because this sacrament is brought about not by human merits but by my words. Second, this offering benefits everybody, no matter which priest offers it. Third, it benefits those who offer it as well, however bad they may be. Just as the single phrase 'I am' made my enemies collapse physically on the ground, so too when my words 'This is my body' are spoken, the devils flee from tempting the souls of the ministers, and they would not dare to return to them with such audacity, if the desire to sin was not there.

So my mercy shows pardon to them all and endures them all. However, my justice calls for retribution, for I cry out each day and you see well enough how many answer me. Nevertheless, I will still send out the words of my mouth. Those who listen will complete the days of their lives in that joy that can neither be expressed nor imagined because of its sweetness. To those, however, who do not listen, there will come, as it is written, seven plagues in the soul and seven plagues in the body. They will find this out, if they think and read about what has been done. Otherwise, they will quake and quail when they do experience it.”

Christ's words to the bride about how three duties belong to the priest: first, to consecrate the body of Christ; second, to have purity of body and spirit; third, to care for his congregation. Also about how he should have a book and oil; and about how a priest is an angel of the Lord, because his office is greater than that of an angel.

Chapter 59

The Son speaks: ”Three duties belong to a priest: first, to consecrate the body of God; second, to have purity of body and spirit; third, to care for his congregation. But, you may ask: 'What good does it do to have a

church if he does not have a congregation?' I answer you: A priest who has the intention of doing good to everyone and of preaching for the love of God has as large a congregation as if he had the whole world, since, if he could speak to the whole world, he would spare no efforts. His good intention is thus reckoned to him as deeds. In fact, on account of the ingratitude of the listeners, God often spares his chosen ones the effort of preaching, but they are not robbed of their reward due to their good disposition.

The priest should also have a book and oil. The book is for the instruction of those who are imperfect, the holy oil is for the anointing of the sick. Just as a book contains spiritual and physical learning, so too the priest should have knowledge about disciplining his body so that it is not ruined through lack of temperance, which would give scandal to the parishioners. He should know how to flee from greed, which debases the beauty of the church, and how to avoid worldly ways, which dishonor the dignity of the clergy. Spiritual knowledge involves instructing the ignorant, correcting the dissolute, urging on the proficient. The oil symbolizes the sweetness of prayer and good example. As oil has a richer taste than bread, so loving prayer and the example of a good life are more effective in attracting people and have a richer taste in order to placate God.

I tell you truly, my daughter, it is a great thing to be called a priest. An angel of the Lord is also a mediator, but the priest's office is greater, for he touches the unfathomable God, and in his hands the lowest things are joined to the things of heaven.”

The bride's words to God about a pleasing way of praying in God's sight.

Chapter 60

“Blessed be you, my Creator and Redeemer. Do not be angry if I speak to you as a wounded patient to the doctor, as a troubled soul to the comforter, as a poor person to a rich and generous one. You see, the

wounded patient says: 'O, doctor, please do not shrink from my pain, for you are my brother!' The troubled soul says: 'O, greatest of comforters, please do not despise me because I am fraught with anxiety, but grant rest to my heart and ease my mind!' The poor person says: 'O, you who are rich and lack nothing, look at me, for I am perilously hungry. See my nakedness, and give me clothing to keep me warm!'

In the same way I say now: O Lord, almighty and most high, I look upon the wounds of my sins that have wounded me from infancy and I sigh, because my time has been spent uselessly. My strength is not up to the task, for it has been wasted in vanities. And so, as you are the source of all goodness and mercy, I beseech you: Have mercy on me; touch my heart with your loving hand, for you are the best of doctors; comfort my soul, for you are the good comforter!"

About how the devil appeared to the bride during the elevation of the body of Christ, speaking to her and trying to prove by argument that what was being elevated was not the body of Christ. An angel of the Lord appeared to her right away to comfort her and tell her not to trust the devil. Also, about how Christ appears and forces the devil to tell her the truth, and about how the body of Christ is received by the wicked as well as the good, and concerning the proper remedy in temptations regarding the body of Christ.

Chapter 61

A monstrous creature appeared to the bride at the elevation of the body of Christ and said: "Do you really believe, silly woman, that this wafer of bread is God? Even if he had been the highest of mountains, he would have been consumed long ago. None of the wise Jews to whom God has given wisdom believes this, nor can anyone believe that God would allow himself to be touched and loved by a most impure priest with the heart of a dog. If you would ascertain the truth of what I say, well, this priest is mine and whenever I want - and he is at the point of it now - I will snatch him away to myself."

Right then, a good angel appeared and said: "O, daughter, answer not a fool according to his folly! It is the father of lies who has appeared to you. But get ready, for our bridegroom is now near." Jesus the Bridegroom came and said to the devil: "Why are you troubling my daughter and bride? I call her daughter, because I created her, and I call her bride, because I redeemed her and have joined her to myself through my love." The devil answered: "I am speaking to her so that she will grow cold in your service, because I have been given permission."

The Lord said: "She experienced that last night when you pressed down on her eyes and the rest of her body and would have done worse, if you had been allowed. Instead, each time she resists your intrusions, her rewards will be doubled. However, devil, as you were saying that I would have been consumed long ago, answer me while she is listening with her physical sense of hearing. Scripture says that, when the people were perishing, a bronze serpent was raised up and everyone who had been bitten was cured upon looking at it. Tell me whether this curative force came from the power of the bronze or the kind of snake or the virtue of Moses or was it a divine and hidden force?" The devil answered: "The curative force came from nothing other than God's own power and from the faith of a believing and obedient people who believed that God, having made all things out of nothing, was also able to do all sorts of things that had never been done before."

God said again: "Tell me, devil, whether the staff was made into a serpent because Moses accomplished it or was it because God commanded it? Was it because Moses was holy or was it because God's word said so?" The devil said to him: "What was Moses but a human being weak in himself whom God had made righteous? At his word, because God commanded and allowed it, the staff became a serpent, inasmuch as God truly commanded it and Moses was his compliant servant. Prior to God's command and word, the staff remained a staff. When the true God ordered it, the staff truly became a serpent, so much so that even Moses was frightened."

Then the Lord said to the bride who was watching all this: "This is what is now taking place on the altar. Prior to the sacramental words, the bread on the altar is bread. When the words 'This is my body' are spoken, the bread becomes the body of Christ that people receive, both the good and the wicked, one person as much as one thousand, according to the same truth but not with the same effect, for the good receive it unto life, while the wicked receive it unto judgment. What the devil said about God being defiled by the impurity of the offering minister is most truly false. It is as though a servant that is a leper were to deliver keys to his master, or if a sick person were to offer medicinal mixtures made from potent herbs, their condition would present no obstacle to the recipient of the service, inasmuch as the objects have the same power in themselves, no matter who brings them. Accordingly, God is not made bad because of the badness of a bad minister nor better because of a good minister, for God is always unchangeable and always the same. The devil spoke truly about this man being about to die soon, though he knew this by means of his natural cunning and through external causes, but he will not be able to snatch him away without my permission.

This priest does belong to him, however, unless he reforms himself. There are three reasons for this. The devil said as much when he said that he had stinking limbs and the heart of a dog. He really does stink and is sick with fever, for he has outer warmth but inner coldness, unbearable thirst, slackness of limb, a loathing for bread and a repugnance of every sweetness. He is indeed warm toward the world and cold toward God. He thirsts for carnal pleasure but has a repugnance to the beauty of virtue. He has no taste for God's commands but is full of fervor for everything carnal. It is therefore not strange that my body holds no other taste for him than that of bread baked in an oven, because he does not meditate on or have any taste for spiritual work, but only for that of the flesh.

Once the Agnus Dei has been said, and my body has been received into his body, the Father's power leaves him and the Son's sweet presence disappears. Once he has taken off the sacred vestments, he no longer has the favor of the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of unity. Only the form and memory of bread remain for him. However, you should not think that he or

any other person is without God, however wicked he or she may be. God leaves him in the sense of not giving him greater consolation, but he remains with him by showing him tolerance and defending him against the devil.

Concerning what the devil said about how none of the wise Jews are willing to believe in this, my answer is: The disposition of these Jews is as though they had lost their right eyes. They limp along on both their spiritual feet and are therefore void of wisdom and will remain so till the end. Thus, it is not strange that the devil blinds and hardens their hearts and induces them to shamelessness and to actions that go against faith. Therefore, whenever any such thought regarding the body of Christ occurs to your mind, have recourse to your spiritual friends and stand firm in the faith, because you may be completely certain that the body that I assumed from the flesh of the Virgin, which was crucified and now reigns in heaven, this very same body is on the altar, and that both the good and the wicked receive it.

Just as I showed myself in a different shape to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and though I was true God and true man when I came to the disciples through locked doors, so too I show myself beneath a different shape by means of priests so that faith may have its reward and human ingratitude may be revealed. That is no wonder: I am still the same now as when I revealed the power of my divinity by means of fearful signs and portents, and yet the people said at the time, "Let us make gods who can precede us." I also revealed my humanity to the Jews, and they crucified it. I am the same each day on the altar, and they say: 'We are disgusted and solely tried by this food.

What greater ingratitude can there be than to try to comprehend God with one's reason and dare to judge the secret counsels and mysteries in God's own power and possession? Hence, by means of an invisible effect and a visible form, I wish to reveal to the unlearned and humble what the visible form of bread is without the substance of bread, what substance is in its form, what division in form is without substance, and why I endure

such indignities and outrages upon my body. It is in order that the humble may be exalted and the proud be put to shame.”

In the bride's presence, the Lord chides a priest who is burying a person who had died in patient suffering. About how Christ will come to wicked priests with seven spiritual plagues and seven bodily ones, and about how that soul obtained heavenly glory for the sake of her patient suffering and other merits.

Chapter 62

When a certain priest was burying a person who had been sick in bed for three and a half years, the bride heard the Spirit saying: "My friend, what are you doing? Why do you presume to touch the dead with your bloodied hands? Why do you make loud appeals to the Almighty for this man's sake with a froglike voice? How do you presume to appease the Judge for his sake when your own morals and manners are more like a jester's than those of a devout priest? It is the power of my words and not your doing that will profit the dead man. It is his faith and long-suffering that will bring him to his reward."

The Spirit then said to the bride: "This man's hands are bloodied in the sense that all his deeds are of a sensual nature. His hands are not worthy to touch the dead man in the sense that he is of no help to him by reason of his own worth but only through the nobleness of the sacrament. Good priests benefit souls especially in two ways: first, through the power of the Lord's body and, second, through the love that burns in them. His voice is like that of frogs in the sense that it is full of dirty deeds and sensual pleasure. His moral behavior is like that of a jester. What else does a jester do but conform himself to worldly morality? What other tune does he sing but 'Let us eat and drink and enjoy life's pleasures'? That is how this man acts. He conforms himself to everyone else in his dress and behavior in order to please them. He incites them all to excess by his own example and extravagance, saying: 'Let us eat and drink, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. It is enough for us to reach the gates of glory. Even if I am not

allowed to enter, it is enough for me to sit outside the gates. I have no wish to be perfect.'

This manner of voice and living is indeed serious. No one shall reach the gates of glory but the perfect or those who have been perfectly purified. No one shall possess my glory but those who perfectly desire it and perfectly struggle to attain it while they can. Yet I, the Lord of the universe, enter into this priest, though without being either enclosed or defiled. I enter as a bridegroom, I leave as the future judge, scorned by the receiver. I will, therefore, as I have said, come to priests, bringing seven plagues. They shall be deprived of everything they held dear. They shall be cast out of God's sight and sentenced in his wrath.

They shall be handed over to demons to suffer without rest, scorned by all, lacking all good things and abounding in every evil. They will likewise be scourged by seven bodily ills, as Israel was. Hence, you should not wonder when I am tolerant with the wicked or when any irreverence is shown to my sacrament. I endure it until the end in order to reveal my patience as well as human ingratitude. Nor should you worry when offenses are committed against my body, such as when you heard about its being spat out. The sensible species show their deficiency as is proper to them, and yet, being transparent, they reveal human ingratitude and show people to be culpable and unworthy to receive holy communion."

The Spirit spoke again to the soul of the dead man: "O, soul, rejoice and exult, because your faith has separated you from the devil. Your simplicity has shortened for you the way through purgatory. Your patience has brought you to the gates of glory where my mercy will lead you in and crown you."

How the devil appeared to the bride with the intention of deceiving her through specious arguments in regard to the sacrament of the body of Christ, and about how Christ came to her assistance and forced the devil to tell her the truth, and about the assurance and beneficial instruction Christ gives to the bride concerning his glorious body in the sacrament.

Chapter 63

A demon with an enormous belly appeared to the bride and said: "Woman, what do you believe? What great things are you thinking about? I, too, know many things and want to prove what I say with clear reasoning, but I would advise you to stop thinking about unbelievable things and to trust your senses. Do you not see with your eyes and hear with the ears of your body the sound of the breaking of the material bread of the host? You have seen it being spat out, touched, shamefully thrown on the ground, and suffering many other indignities that I would never allow to be done to me. Even if it is possible for God to be in the mouth of the righteous, how can he stoop to come to the unrighteous whose greed is without limit or measure?"

She turned to Christ who had appeared in human form immediately after the temptations. She said: "O Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you for all things and especially for these three. First, that you clothe my soul with the inspiration of penance and contrition by which every sin is washed away, no matter how serious. Second, that you feed my soul with the infusion of your charity and the memory of your passion by which the soul is refreshed as though with the best of foods. Third, that you console all those who invoke you in the midst of hardship. Therefore, Lord, have mercy on me and strengthen my faith, for, although I deserve to be handed over to the deceits of the devil, still I believe that he can do nothing without your permission and that your permission is never given without consolation."

Then Christ said to the devil: "Why are you speaking to my new bride?" The devil answered: "Because she is tied to me, and I still hope to ensnare her in my snares. She is tied to me when, by consenting to me, she has sought to please and has pleased me more than you, her Creator. I have watched her ways, and they have not yet escaped my memory." The Lord answered: "Are you a negotiator, then, and a spy of every highway?" The devil answered: "Yes, I am a spy but in darkness. You made me dark." The Lord asked: "When were you able to see and how did you become dark?"

The demon said, "I could see when you created me most beautiful, but, because I rashly thrust myself upon your splendor, it blinded me like the basilisk. I could see you when I desired your beauty. I could see you and knew you in my conscience when you rejected me. I also recognized you in your assumed flesh, and I did what you give me permission to do. I recognized you when you robbed me of your captives. Every day I recognize the power by which you mock and shame me."

The Lord said: "If you know and understand the truth about me, why do you lie to my chosen ones, when you realize the truth about me? Did I not say that he who eats my flesh shall have eternal life? And you say that it is a lie and that no one eats my flesh. Hence, my people are more idolatrous than those who worship stones and trees. Although I know all things, yet answer me while this woman here is listening, for she is unable to understand spiritual truths except by means of images. Was my body that Thomas touched after my resurrection a spiritual or corporeal body? If it was corporeal, how did it pass through the locked doors? But, if it was spiritual, how was it visible to corporeal eyes?"

The devil answered: "It is hard to speak when the speaker is held in suspicion by everyone and he is unwillingly compelled to speak the truth.

However, seeing that I am compelled, I state that you were both corporeal and spiritual after rising from the dead. It is because of the eternal power of your divinity and because of a special privilege of your glorified flesh that you can enter anywhere and be present everywhere." The Lord said further: "Tell me, when Moses' staff was turned into a serpent, was it only the image of a serpent or was it completely a serpent both inside and outside? And tell me again, the leftover bread in those baskets, was it really and wholly bread or just the image of bread?" The devil answered: "The entire staff became a serpent, what was in the baskets was entirely bread, and it was entirely done by your power and might."

The Lord said: "Is it more difficult or more miraculous for me to perform a similar miracle now than it was then, if I please? Or, if my glorified flesh could pass through the locked doors then, why can it not be

in the hands of the priests now? Does it, perhaps, entail an effort for my divinity to unite that which is least with that which is heavenly, the earthly with the most sublime? Certainly not. But, father of lies, just as you excel in wickedness, so too my love is and always shall be upon all creatures. Even if one person should seem to burn the sacrament with fire, or another to trample it underfoot, I alone know the faith of all and arrange everything in due measure and patience. I create something out of nothing and a visible thing out of an invisible one. I can reveal something through a visible sign and shape that, however, truly is one thing in what is signified, yet is seen as something else.”

The devil answered: ”I experience the truth of this everyday when people who are my friends depart from me to become your friends. But what more shall I say? The slave left to himself shows well enough by his will what he would carry out in act if allowed.” Then the Son of God spoke once more: ”My daughter, believe that I am Christ, the restorer of life and not the betrayer, the true one, the very truth itself and not a liar, the eternal power without which nothing ever was or shall be. If you believe that I am in the hands of the priest, even if the priest doubts it, then I am truly in his hands due to the faith of the believers and those present, as well as due to the words that I myself established and uttered. Everyone who receives me receives both my divine and human natures as well as the form of bread.

What is God if not life and sweetness, illuminating light, delightful goodness, judicious justice, saving mercy? What is my humanity if not an active body, the conjunction of God and man, the head of all Christians?

Therefore, those who believe in God and receive his body receive the divine nature as well, for they receive life. They also receive the human nature by which God and man are joined. Again, they receive the form of bread, because the One who is hidden as to his own form is received beneath a different form as a test of faith. Likewise, wicked persons also receive the same divinity but as a stern judge rather than an affectionate friend. They receive his human nature as well, though less easily appeased. They also receive the form of bread, for they receive the truth hidden beneath the visible form, but it is not sweet to them.

Once they put me in their mouths and chew, the sacrament is fulfilled, but I depart from them with my divinity and humanity, and only the form of bread remains for them. It is not that I am not truly present in the wicked as well as in the good due to the institution of the sacrament, but that the effect is not the same for the good as for the wicked. Life itself, God, is offered to man in this sacrifice. So, life enters into the wicked but does not remain with them, because they do not give up their wickedness. Thus, only the form of bread remains there for their senses to perceive. Yet, this is not because the bread's form behind the bread's substance has any effect upon them, but because they think no more of what they have received than what they see and perceive of the form of bread and wine. It is as if a mighty lord were to enter someone's house and his appearance were to be noticed but the presence of his goodness ignored.”

The Mother's words to the daughter comparing her Son to a poor peasant, and about how troubles and persecutions occur to good and bad alike, though they lead the good by patience toward purification and reward.

Chapter 64

The Mother speaks: ”My Son is like a poor peasant who has neither ox nor donkey but instead carries the wood himself from the forest as well as the other tools needed to complete his work. Among his tools, he carries birch-rods. He needs these for two reasons: in order to flog disobedient children and to create warmth for cold people. My Son, the Lord and Creator of the universe, made himself most poor in order to so enrich everyone not with fleeting but with eternal riches. Carrying on his back the heavy weight of the bitter cross, he cleansed and obliterated everyone's sins with his blood. Among his various works, he selected tools of virtue, that is, virtuous persons through whom the hearts of many have been inflamed with the love of God through the operation of the Spirit of God, thus making the path of truth known.

He also selected birch-rods, which stand for the lovers of this world, through whom the children and friends of God are flogged for their own improvement and purification and for their greater precaution and reward. The rods also warm the cold children, and even God grows warm by their fire. How does this happen? Well, when the worldly cause trouble for God's friends as well as for those who almost only love God out of fear, these turn in their troubles to God with greater fervor, considering the emptiness of the world. Then God has compassion on their troubles and gives them encouragement and love.

But what will become of the rods once the children have been flogged? They will surely be cast into the burning fire. God certainly does not scorn his own people when he delivers them into the hands of the impious. Rather, he is like a father who raises his children and makes use in this way of the wickedness of the impious as a means to their reward.”

The Mother's admonishment to her daughter with a simile to show how God's friends should not weary of nor leave off their work of preaching; also, about the great reward for such preachers.

Chapter 65

The Mother speaks: ”You ought to be like an empty vessel ready to be filled, neither so wide that it cannot hold what is poured into it, nor so deep that it lacks a bottom. This vessel is your body, which is empty when it is a stranger to desire. It has the proper width when the flesh is prudently disciplined so that the soul is able to understand spiritual things and the body is strong enough to work. The vessel is bottomless when the flesh is not restrained by any form of abstinence and the body is not denied whatever the mind desires.

Now listen to what I have to say: My servant uttered an unfeathered word when he said: 'What is it to me to be speaking about things that do not have to do with my state in life?' Words like that are not fitting for a

servant of God. Anyone who hears and knows the truth and is silent about it is liable to punishment, if not to being completely rejected.

A certain ruler had a strong castle in which there were four good things: undecaying food that chased away all hunger, healthy water that quenched every thirst, a sweet-smelling fragrance that drove away all poisonous vapors, indispensable weapons to weaken every foe. While the ruler was attending to other matters, the castle was at last besieged. When the ruler found out, he said to his herald: 'Go and proclaim the following with a loud voice to my soldiers: I, your ruler, shall free my castle. Anyone who follows me with a good will shall be with me in my glory and receive similar honor. If anyone falls in battle, I will raise him up to a life without need or anxiety. I shall give him lasting honor and unfailing plenty.' The servant received his orders and made the proclamation, but he was not careful enough in doing so and the proclamation did not reach the ears of the most valiant soldier. So this soldier kept away from the battle. What will the ruler do to this soldier who would gladly have fought but who did not hear the words of the herald? Indeed, he will be rewarded for the sake of his good will, but the negligent herald will not be exempt from punishment.

This castle is the Holy Church founded through the blood of my Son. In the church is his body that chases away all hunger. In it is the water of gospel wisdom, the fragrance of saintly example, and the weapons of his passion. This castle is now beset by enemies, for many are to be found in the Holy Church who preach my Son with their voices but do not agree with him in their conduct. What they speak with their voices, they contradict in their intentions, for they do not care about their heavenly homeland but only want to gain their own pleasure. Accordingly, in order that the enemies of God may decrease in number, the friends of God should be unflagging in their efforts, for their reward will not be a temporal one but the kind knowing no end."

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the prudent possession of temporal goods does no harm, provided that the desire to possess them is not disordered.

Chapter 66

The Mother speaks: "What harm does it do if someone's clothes get poked by a needle or a bit of iron so long as the skin is not injured? In the same way, a prudent possession of temporal goods does no harm, provided that the desire to possess them is not disordered. Therefore, examine your heart to ensure that your intention is good, because the words of God must be spread to others through you.

As the sluice gate of a water-mill blocks the water and then lets it flow whenever necessary, so too you must carefully examine the various thoughts and temptations occurring to you in order to get rid of vain and worldly ideas, while keeping continuously in mind divine ones. It is written, you know, that the lower waters flowed downward but the upper waters stood like a wall.

The lower waters stand for carnal thoughts and useless desires. These should just flow off without attracting any attention. The upper waters stand for the inspirations of God and the words of the saints. These should remain in your heart like steadfast walls that no temptations can batter away from your heart."

Christ's words to the bride disclosing his magnificence, and about how all things proceed according to his designs, with the exception of sinners' wretched souls. Figurative examples are given concerning all this. Also, about how the will must be guarded in one's actions.

Chapter 67

The Son speaks to the bride: "I am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. All things were foreseen and established by my divine providence from the beginning and before the ages. All things, bodily as well as spiritual, have a certain plan and order, and they exist and move

along according as my foreknowledge has ordained and foreknown. Three examples will help you to understand this. First, you can understand it from living things as well as from the fact that the woman and not the man gives birth.

Second, it can be seen from the fact that sweet trees bear sweet fruit, while bitter trees bear bitter fruit. Third, it can be seen from the stars, that is, that the sun and moon and all the heavenly bodies complete their course as predetermined in my divinity. Rational souls are also foreknown in my divinity. I know beforehand what they will become, but my foreknowledge is in no way an obstacle or hindrance to them, for I have given them free voluntary motion, that is, free will and the power to choose whatever they like.

Consequently, as the woman and not the man gives birth, so too the good soul, God's wife, should give birth with God's help, for the soul was created in order to advance in virtue and grow fruitful through the seed of the virtues, so that she may be clasped in the arms of divine love. The soul that falls away from her original excellence and from her Creator acts contrary to God's plans and is therefore unworthy of God's sweetness.

Second, God's unchanging plan appears in trees, because sweet trees bear sweet fruit and bitter trees the opposite. A date has both a sweet pulp and a hard stone. Similarly, it has been foreseen from all eternity that wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, there all worldly delight turns vile, and all worldly honor becomes burdensome. In such a heart, however, there is so much strength and hardness from the Holy Spirit that it is not cast down by any adversity nor overly elated by any success. It has been similarly foreseen from all eternity that wherever the devil's briar is, the fruit will be red on the outside but all unclean and full of prickles on the inside. Thus, while there is momentary and apparent sweetness in the devil's delight, it is full of thorns and tribulations, because the more someone gets entangled in the world, the more heavily that person is weighed down by the burden of the account to be rendered. And so, just as every tree produces its fruit according to the kind of roots and trunk it has, so too every person is judged according to the intention behind his or her deeds.

In the third place, all the elements keep to their own order and motion, as foreseen from eternity, and move according to the will of their Maker. Likewise, every rational creature should move and prepare itself according to the order established by the Creator. When a rational creature does the opposite, it is obvious that it is abusing its freedom of choice. So, while irrational creatures keep to their limits, rational human beings debase their original excellence and render their sentence heavier by not making use of their reason.

Thus, the human will must be guarded. I do no more injury to the devil than to my angels. As God requires that chaste, indescribable sweetness from his bride, so the devil looks for thorns and prickles from his bride. Yet, the devil can in no way prevail, unless the power of the will has been corrupted.”

The Mother's words to her daughter about a fox, and about how the devil is like a fox, and about how the devil, like a clever fox, deceives people with many and varied temptations, and tries all he can to deceive all those whom he sees making progress in virtue.

Chapter 68

The Mother speaks: "The small animal called a fox is very diligent and clever in getting everything it needs. Sometimes it pretends to be asleep or even dead so that the birds lose their caution and perch right on top of it, and the fox can then easily catch and devour the birds so uncautious as to perch there. It watches how the birds fly, and snatches and devours any it sees resting from their fatigue on the ground or under a tree. However, the birds that fly with both their wings confuse and frustrate him in his efforts.

This fox represents the devil. He is always following God's friends and especially those who lack his malicious bile and wicked venom. He pretends to be asleep and dead in the sense that he sometimes leaves a

person free from more serious temptations so as to deceive and ensnare him unawares more easily in small ones. Sometimes he even makes vice seem like virtue and virtue like vice, in order that a person gets caught and falls into a hole and comes to ruin, unless prudence comes to his aid. An example will help you to understand this.

Sometimes mercy can be a vice, namely, when it is practiced merely to please people. Rigorous justice can be injustice, when it is exercised because of greed or impatience. Humility can be pride, when one makes a display of it in order to attract attention. Patience seems to be a virtue but is not in a situation where one would seek revenge if one could, but must endure an offense simply because there is no opportunity for revenge. Sometimes the devil also submits people to trials and tribulations in order to break them through excessive sadness. Sometimes, too, the devil fills people's hearts with anxiety and worry so as to make them become lukewarm in God's service or, when they are careless in small respects, to make them fall in greater ones.

It was in this way that the person of whom I am speaking was tricked by the fox. When he reached old age and had everything he wanted, and declared himself to be happy and to wish to go on living, he was then snatched away without the sacraments and without atoning for his life and deeds. Like an ant, he used to gather his stores night and day, though not in the storehouse of the Lord. But, when he had reached the entrance of the anthill where he was bringing his grain, he died and left his work for others. He who does not fruitfully gather in the time of harvest will not have the enjoyment of the corn.

Happy are those birds of the Lord that do not sleep beneath the trees of worldly delights but in the trees of heavenly desires. If ever a temptation of that wicked fox, the devil, lays hold of them, they quickly fly away on the wings of humble confession and the hope of heavenly assistance.”

EXPLANATION

Christ, the Son of God, speaks: "This provost is material for the episcopate. Whoever wants to climb the tree of sweet fruit should be free from every burden, girded and ready for gathering, having a clean vessel in which to put the fruit. Let this man seek eagerly now to decorate his body with virtues. He should supply it with the necessities but not the superfluities of life. He should flee the occasions of incontinence and greed and show himself to be a clean mirror and an example for imperfect men. Otherwise a horrible fall will come upon him, a sudden end by the stroke of my hand."

All this came to pass.

Christ's words to the bride comparing the good conduct and good deeds of the clergy to clear water and their bad conduct and bad deeds to filthy, brutish water.

Chapter 69

The Son speaks: "You can tell that water from a spring is not good, depending on three things. First, if the water does not have the proper color; second, if it is muddy; third, if it is always stagnant and not in motion, letting in dirt but not getting rid of it.

By these waters, I have in mind the conduct and hearts of the clergy. In the goodness of their conduct, they should be like springwater that is sweet to drink, impervious to all the dirt of vice. Therefore, a priest's proper color is true humility. The more he sees himself as obliged to work for God, the more he will humble himself in thought and deed. The devil's color is found wherever there is pride. Pride is like a leprous hand scooping up water from a spring and making the water itself seem repulsive to those watching. In the same way, a priest's pride shows his works to be defiled.

The water is muddy if a priest is greedy and not content with the necessities of life. When he is anxious he is useless to himself and harmful to others through the example of his greed. Third, the water is unclean

when it lets in but does not rid itself of any dirt. This arises both from its outlet being closed and because it has no motion. A priest is thus unclean when he loves carnal pleasures in his heart and body and does not get rid of the unclean things that occur to him. Blemishes anywhere on the body are ugly but especially so on the face. In the same way, impurity should be hateful to everyone but especially to those who are called to higher things. Accordingly, those priests should be chosen for my work who are not full of verbose knowledge but of humility and purity, who behave well in themselves and teach others by word and example. Even a leprous hand is useful for my work, provided the mind is good and the spiritual hand is not lacking.”

The Mother's words to her daughter narrating in order the passion of her blessed Son, and describing her Son's beauty and form.

Chapter 70

The Mother speaks: ”When my Son's passion was near at hand, tears filled his eyes and sweat covered his body from fear of suffering. Next, he was taken from my sight, and I did not see him again until he was led out to be scourged. He was then dragged along the ground and thrown down so cruelly and violently that it knocked his head about and broke his teeth. He was struck on his neck and cheek so forcefully that the sound of the blows reached my ears. At the command of the executioner, he undressed himself and freely hugged the pillar. He was bound with a rope and then scourged with barbed whips. The barbs caught in his skin and were then pulled backward, not just tearing but plowing into him so as to wound his whole body.

At the first blow, it was as though my heart had been pierced and I had lost the use of my senses. Then, coming out of it, I see his whole wounded body - for his body was naked during the scourging. Then one of his enemies said to the executioners: 'Do you intend to kill this man without a sentence and cause his death yourselves?' He cut the ropes as he said this.

Once released from the pillar, my Son turned first to get his clothes, yet he was not given the time to put them on but was led away while still putting his arms into his sleeves. The footprints he left at the pillar were so full of blood that I could easily make them out and see which way they led by the mark of his blood. And he wiped his bloody face with his tunic.

After the sentence he was led out carrying the cross, but, along the way, another man took his turn carrying it. Once he arrived at the place for crucifixion, a hammer and four sharp nails were ready for him there. He took off his clothes when ordered but covered his private parts with a small cloth. He proceeded to tie it on as though it gave him some consolation to do so. The cross was planted firmly, and the crossbeam was so placed that the juncture was at the center of the shoulder blades. The cross did not have any kind of headrest. The sign with his sentence on it was attached to each arm of the cross sticking out above the head.

On being ordered, he lay down with his back to the cross and, when he was asked to do so, first stretched out his right hand. Then, since his left hand could not reach the other corner of the cross, it had to be stretched out at full length. His feet were similarly stretched out to reach the slots for the nails and placed crosswise, and, as if they had been loosened from the shinbones, were fastened to the wood of the cross by two nails driven through solid bone, as had been done with his hands. At the first hammer stroke, I was thrown into a stupor of sorrow, and when I awoke I saw my Son already fastened to the cross. I heard men saying to one another: 'What has this man committed - theft, robbery, or fraud?' Others answered that he was a fraud. Then the crown of thorns was pushed down on his head so hard that it came down to the middle of his forehead. Streams of blood poured down from where the thorns sat and filled his face and hair and eyes and beard so that almost nothing at all but blood could be seen. He could not even see me standing there by the cross without blinking to get rid of the blood.

After he had entrusted me to his disciple, he lifted up his head, raised his weeping eyes to heaven, and cried out with a voice from deep within his chest, saying: 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' Never

was I able to forget that cry, not until I came to heaven, the cry that he uttered, moved more by my suffering than by his own. Now the color of death appeared in those parts of his body that were visible beneath the blood. His cheeks cleaved to his teeth. You could count his thin, naked ribs. His stomach, emptied now of all its juices, was sucked in toward his back, and even his nostrils looked thin now. When his heart was near to breaking, his whole body shook and his beard fell toward his chest. Right then, I collapsed lifeless to the ground. His mouth remained open, as he had already breathed his last. His tongue and teeth and the blood in his mouth were visible to onlookers. His half-closed eyes had rolled backward. His now dead body sagged downward, with his knees bent to either side, and his feet bending on the nails like hinges.

Meanwhile other people standing nearby were saying almost insultingly, 'O, Mary, your son is dead.' Others, more noble-minded, were saying: 'Lady, your son's suffering is now ended unto his eternal glory.' A little later, after his side had been opened, the lance was pulled out with blood that was brown in color showing on its tip, which meant that the lance had pierced his heart. That penetrating lance was also felt going through my own heart, and it is a wonder that my heart did not burst. Though the others were going away, I could not go away. I felt almost comforted to be able to touch his body when it was taken down from the cross, and take it in my arms, and explore his wounds and wipe away the blood. I closed his mouth with my fingers and shut his eyes as well. I could not bend his rigid arms all the way back to repose on his chest but only across his stomach. His knees could not be straightened out but pointed outward in the same position in which they had stiffened on the cross."

The Mother speaks again: "Though you cannot see my Son as he exists in heaven, hear at least how he was in body on earth. He was so fair of face that no one, not even someone very sad at heart, could see him face-to-face without being cheered at his sight. The righteous were cheered with spiritual comfort, but even the wicked found relief from the sorrow of the world for as long as they looked on him. For that reason, people who

were sad used to say: 'Let us go and see Mary's son and at least find some relief as long as we are there.'

In his twentieth year of age, he was perfect in size and manly strength, tall for the men of medium height in those days, not fleshy but well built as to muscles and bones. His hair, eyelashes, and beard were golden brown. His beard was a palm-width in length. His forehead was neither sunken but straight. His nose was evenly built, neither too little nor too large.

His eyes were so limpid that even his enemies loved to gaze on him. His lips were not too thick and were bright red. His jaw did not jut out and was not too long but attractive and of a fine length. His cheeks were nicely rounded. He was fair-skinned with traces of red, and he had straight posture. There was not a blemish on his whole body, as his scourgers can testify who saw him bound to the pillar completely naked. There were never any vermin or knots or dirt in his hair.”

Christ puts loving questions to the bride, and she gives humble answers to him, and about how Christ submitted three praiseworthy states to the choice of the bride: the state of virginity, the married state, and the widowed state.

Chapter 71

The Son of God speaks to his bride: ”Answer for me the four questions I ask. If someone gives his friend a fruitful vine but keeps it close to his own house so that he might have the pleasure of seeing and smelling it, what should the giver say if the new owner of the vine were to ask if he could transplant it to another place where it could bear more plentiful fruit?” She answers: ”If the friend gave him it out of love and was sensible and desired the good for his friend, then he would certainly allow him to do whatever he wanted with the vine, saying: 'My friend, though it makes me happy to have the vine close by, still it does not yield me much fruit, and so I am happy if you can transfer it, if you like, to a more fertile spot.' ”

The Lord asked a second time: "If parents were to give their maiden daughter to a young man, and she consented to the youth, but if the boy, when asked by the parents whether he wanted to have her or not, does not give an answer, is the girl betrothed then or not?" She answered: "It seems to me that, since the boy did not express his own wishes, the girl is not betrothed."

The Lord spoke a third time: "A noble youth in the company of three maidens proposed to them that whichever of them could express herself in a way that excited his love the most would obtain that which the youth loved the most. The first girl answered: 'I love this young man so much that I would rather die than disgrace myself with another man.' The second girl said: 'And I would rather suffer any kind of pain than utter a single word against his wishes.' The third answered: 'I would prefer to suffer any kind of bitter pain or condemnation rather than see his least little scorn or condemnation.' " Then the Lord said: "Tell me, which of these three maidens loved the youth most and should receive his preferential love?" She answered: "It seems to me that they all loved him equally, since they were all of one accord in his respect, and all of them equally deserve to have his love."

The Lord spoke a fourth time: "A man once consulted his friend and said: 'I have very fertile wheat. If it is sown in the ground, it yields a great crop. However, I am very hungry, so what do you think is more advisable: to eat it or to sow it in the ground?' His friend answers: 'Your hunger can be stilled at another time. Now it is more useful for you to sow it in the ground.' " Then the Lord added: "My daughter, do you not think the same - should not the person experiencing hunger endure it and plant the grain so that it will be good for many people?"

The Lord said again: "These four examples apply to you. Your daughter is like a vine that you have vowed and given to me. Now, however, since I know a more suitable place for her, I want to transplant her where I please, and you should not be upset by this, since you gave your consent to the transplantation."

The Lord said again: "You gave me your daughter, but I did not show you which would be more acceptable to me, her virginity or her matrimony, or whether your sacrifice pleased me or not. Therefore, the things that were done in uncertainty can be changed and corrected now that they are known with certainty." The Lord said again: "Virginity is good and most excellent, for it resembles the angelic state, provided it is maintained with wisdom and virtue.

But if the one is missing from the other, that is, if there is virginity of the flesh but not of the mind, then that virginity has been deformed. A devout and humble housewife is more acceptable to me than a proud and immodest virgin. A God-fearing housewife, who is in control of herself and lives according to the rule of her state, can win equal merit as a humble and modest virgin. Although it is a great thing to stand the test of fire without burning, it is an equally great thing to remain outside the fire of the religious state but to be willing to be in the fire and to burn with greater ardor outside the fire than one does who is in the fire.

I offer you the example of three women - Susanna, Judith, and Thecla the virgin. The first was married, the second a widow, the third a virgin. They had different ways of life and made different choices, but they gained a similar reward by their meritorious deeds. When Susanna was falsely molested by the priests, she preferred, out of love for God, death to disgracing her state in life. Because she feared me as being everywhere present, she deserved to be saved and to be glorified for the sake of her salvation. When Judith saw the dishonor done to me and her people being lost, she was so troubled that she not only exposed herself to blame and condemnation for the sake of her love for God, but was also prepared to suffer punishment for my sake. Finally, Thecla, who was a virgin, preferred to suffer bitter torments than to utter a single word against me. These three women, although their actions were not one and the same, nevertheless were equal in merit. Therefore, whether virgin or widow, everyone is equally capable of pleasing me, provided that all their desire is directed toward me and that their life is virtuous."

The Lord said again: "It is equally acceptable to me whether your daughter remains a virgin or marries, provided that it is done according to my will. What would it profit her if she perhaps were cloistered in body but remained outside the walls in her mind? Or, which would be more glorious: to live for herself or for the benefit of others? I know and foresee all things, and I do nothing without a reason. Therefore, she shall not arrive at her destination by the first fruit, for that would be out of fear, nor the second fruit, for that would be out of lukewarmness.

She will, however, arrive in the middle state, for that has just the right warmth of love and fruit of virtue. However, the man who is to receive her should possess three things - housing, clothing, and food enough to receive her."

EXPLANATION

The Son speaks: "You are wondering why this virgin did not come to be married in the way you hoped. I answer by way of a parable. A certain nobleman arranged to give his daughter in marriage to a poor man. This man, who was to have been betrothed to the maiden, broke the laws of the city and was dishonorably expelled by the citizens and did not get the maiden whom he desired. I have acted in the same manner with the ruler of this country. I promised to do great things for him, but instead he joined my enemies and therefore did not obtain the things I promised him.

But you might ask: Could I not foresee the future? Of course, I foresaw it, in the same way as can be read in the case of Moses and his people. I have revealed and do reveal many things so that people can prepare themselves for good things and know what to do and wait patiently. Know, however, that one woe has passed and another shall come upon the ungrateful people of this kingdom in order that my blessing may afterward come upon the humble persons who entreat my mercy. Know, too, that it would be better for this virgin to follow the advice of the wise and of me."

This virgin is believed to have been Lady Cecilia, St. Bridget's daughter. Concerning her, see St. Bridget's biography.

The words of Christ concerning the sisters of the risen Lazarus, and about how (as I believe) the sisters stand for the bride and her daughter, Lazarus for the soul, the Jews for envious persons, and about how God has shown the latter greater mercy than he did for the sisters of Lazarus, and about how people who talk much but do little become indignant against those who do good deeds.

Chapter 72

The Son speaks: "There were two sisters, Martha and Mary, whose brother I raised from the dead. After his resurrection, he served me more than before. His sisters, too, though they had been my servants and zealous in attending to me before their brother's resurrection, showed themselves much more solicitous and devoted afterward. I have treated you in a similar way spiritually. Thus, I raised your brother, that is, your soul that - fetid after being dead for four days - had separated itself from me by breaking my commandments, by base desire and delight in the sweetness of the world and of sins.

There were, however, four reasons that moved me to raise Lazarus. The first was that he had been my friend while he lived. The second was the love of his sisters. The third was that Mary's humility had earned such a reward when she washed my feet. She deserved to be gladdened and honored to the extent to which she had lowered herself for my sake in the sight of the guests. The fourth reason was to manifest the glory of my human nature. These four reasons do not, however, apply to you, since you love the world more than they did. Therefore, my mercy toward you is greater than my mercy toward those sisters. It is clearly all the greater inasmuch as spiritual death is more dangerous than bodily death, and the resurrection of the soul is more glorious than bodily resurrection.

Hence, since my mercy excels your deeds, welcome me, as those sisters did, into the home of your minds with most fervent charity, loving nothing as me, having total trust in me, each day humbling yourselves along with Mary by weeping for your sins, unashamed to live humble

among the proud, chaste among the unchaste, showing to others outwardly how much you love me inwardly. Furthermore, like those sisters, you ought to be of one heart and one mind, strong in scorning the world and quick in praising God. If you do so, then I will raise your brother - your soul - for you and protect it from being killed by the Jews.

What would it have profited Lazarus to rise from a present death, unless, by living more virtuously in the present life, he might rise up more glorious to a second and lasting life? Who are the Jews who sought to kill Lazarus if not those who become indignant because you lead better lives than theirs, who have learned to speak loftily but to do little, who, seeking the approval of others, scorn the deeds of their predecessors with all the greater scorn the less they themselves deign to understand the higher truths?

There are many such people. They know how to discourse on the virtues but not how to observe them by leading virtuous lives. Their souls are therefore in danger, because their words are many but their deeds are not to be seen. Did my preachers act in this manner? By no means! They certainly did not admonish sinners with lofty words but with few and charitable words, and they were ready to give their own souls for the souls of sinners. Through their charity, others obtained charity, for the teacher's zeal forms the mind of the listener more than mere words do. Many preachers nowadays say abstruse things about me, but no fruit comes of it, because wood is not set on fire by merely blowing on it but only with the aid of sparks of fire.

I shall guard and protect you from these Jews so that you will not leave me because of what they do or say. Yet, I shall not protect you in such a way that you escape every suffering but that you may not succumb due to lack of patient endurance. Stick to your resolution, and I shall set your will on fire with my charity.”

The Virgin's words to the bride concerning how she should not be upset about the knight who was declared to be dead and shown to her as though dead.

Chapter 73

A certain knight who was alive was declared to be dead. In a spiritual vision he was also shown to the bride to be as though he were dead and begging for help. Because this lady was upset by his death, the Mother of mercy said to her: "Daughter, you will find out in time whether or not the knight is dead, but we still want to strive so that he may live a better life."

Christ's words to his bride; John the Baptist's words of praise to Christ, and the devout prayers he pours forth in Christ's presence on behalf of Christians and especially for a certain knight. Through John's prayers, the knight, with his own hands and with the helping hands of the glorious Virgin and of Peter and Paul, is armed and decorated with spiritual weapons, that is, with the virtues. Also, what each of these bodily weapons signifies, and about praying well.

Chapter 74

The Son of God was speaking to his bride, saying: "You set it down today that it is better to forestall than to be forestalled. Indeed, I forestalled you with my sweet grace so that the devil would not gain control of your soul."

John the Baptist suddenly appeared and said: "Blessed are you, God! You preexist all things. There has never been another god together with you or besides you nor will there ever be any after you, for you are and were one God forever. You are the truth promised by the prophets. While yet unborn I rejoiced in you. I recognized you more fully when I pointed you out. You are our joy and our glory, our longing and our delight. The sight of you fills us with an indescribable pleasure, which none knows but the one who has tasted of it. You are our only love. It is no wonder that we love you, for you are love itself, and you love not only those who love you but, being the creator of all, you are even charitable to those who scorn to know you. Now then, my Lord, because we are rich through you and in

you, we ask you to give of our spiritual riches to those who lack riches so that more people may partake of our good fortune, just as we rejoice not in our own merits but in you.”

Christ answers: ”You are indeed an uppermost limb alongside and next to the head. Yet the neck is closer and more excellent. As I am the head of all, so my Mother is like the neck, and then come the angels. You and my apostles are like the joints of the backbone, for you not only love me, but you also honor me by helping those who love me. What I said therefore remains firm: The works that I do, you shall also do, and your will is my will. As the head of the body does not move without its limbs, so too in your spiritual connection and union with me it is not one thing to wish and another to be able to do, but rather you have every ability to do what each one of you wishes. Therefore, your request shall be fulfilled.”

After these words were spoken, John brought a certain knight who was almost half-dead into their midst and said: ”Here, Lord, here is a man who has consecrated his knighthood to you. He is trying to struggle but is not strong enough, for he is unarmed and weak. I am bound to help him for a twofold reason, both because of his parents' merits and because of the love he feels toward my honor. Therefore, for your own glory, give him a knight's attire to keep the shame of his nakedness from being seen.”

The Lord answered: ”Give him what you like and fit him out as you please!” Then John said: ”Come, my son, and receive from me the first garment of your knighthood. Once you have it, you will more easily be able to receive and bear the rest of your knightly gear. It is fitting for a knight to have a soft and smooth tunic close to his skin. The bodily tunic is soft and smooth, and likewise your spiritual tunic must be to keep God dear to your soul and delightful to your affections.

Delight in God comes from two things: the consideration of his kindnesses, and the remembrance of the sins you have committed. I had both of them as a boy. You see, I considered what a grace God had prepared for me while I was not yet born, and what a blessing he had given me after my birth. I sighed to consider how I might worthily repay my

God. I considered, too, the instability of the world, and so I ran off to the desert where my Lord Jesus became so sweet for me that the thought of all the world's pleasures wearied me and the mere desire for them became a burden. Come, then, and put on this tunic, for the rest will be given to you in due time."

Then Blessed Peter the Apostle appeared and said: "John gave you a tunic, but I, who fell low but got up like a man, shall procure for you a coat of mail, that is, divine charity. Just as chain mail consists of many iron rings, so too charity protects a man against enemy missiles and makes him more even-tempered in enduring the evils that threaten, more agile in honoring God and more fervent in divine works, invincible in adversity, calm in hope, steadfast in the tasks he undertakes. This chain mail should shine like gold and be as strong as steel and iron, for everyone who has charity should be as malleable as gold in the endurance of adversity as well as shining in wisdom and discernment so as not to exchange heresy for sound faith nor doubt for certain truth.

The mail must be as strong as iron. Just as iron subdues all, so too a man of charity must be eager to humble all those who stand in the way of faith and good morals without yielding because of abusive language. He must not bend due to friendships nor grow lukewarm for the sake of his own material comforts. He must not hide for the sake of bodily ease, nor be afraid of dying, for no one can take someone's life away without God's permission. Now, though chain mail consists of many rings, nevertheless the chain mail of charity is woven of two principal rings. The first ring of charity is the knowledge of God and the frequent consideration of divine kindnesses and precepts.

This makes a man recognize how he should behave toward God, toward his neighbor, and toward the world. The second ring is the curbing of one's selfish will for God's sake. Everyone with a perfect and whole love of God keeps nothing of his own will for himself if it goes against God. Here, my son, God gives you this coat of mail, which I have won for you as was anticipated by God's grace."

Blessed Paul then appeared and said: "O, my son, Peter, the chief pastor of the sheep, gave you a coat of mail. Of love for God, I shall give you that cuirass that is love for your neighbor, a willingness to die freely for your neighbor's salvation with the help of God's grace. Just as many plates are combined in a cuirass and bound together with nails, so too there are many virtues that come together in the love for one's neighbor. Everyone who loves his neighbor is bound to feel sorrow, first of all, because not all of those redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ repay God with love in return. He should feel sorrow, in the second place, because the Holy Church, God's bride, is not in the most commendable condition. Third, because there are very few who remember God's sufferings with anguish and love. Fourth, he should be on his guard so that his neighbor may not be corrupted by any bad example of his own. Fifth, he should give his possessions to his neighbor cheerfully and pray to God for him that he may advance and become perfect in every goodness.

The nails that hold the plates together are godly words. When a charitable man sees his neighbor in trouble, he should comfort him with words of charity; he should defend him when unjustly attacked; he should visit the sick, ransom hostages, and not be ashamed of the poor. He should ever love the truth, put nothing ahead of the love of God, and never swerve from the way of justice. I myself was outfitted with this cuirass, for I was weak with the weak, unashamed to speak the truth in the sight of kings and princes, and ready to die for the salvation of my neighbor."

Then the Mother of God appeared and said to the knight: "My son, what do you still need?" And he said: "I have no helmet for my head." The Mother of mercy then said to the guardian angel of his soul: "How did your guardianship benefit his soul and what do you have to present to our Lord?" The angel answered: "I do have something to present, but it is not much. Sometimes he gave alms and sometimes said prayers. Sometimes, too, he denied his own will for God's sake, sincerely asking God to make the world become distasteful to him and God dear to him above all things."

The Mother answered: "It is good that you have something to bring. We will then do what a skillful goldsmith does when he is about to make

some grand object out of gold. If he needs gold and does not have it, he turns for help to friends who have it. His friends who have gold help him to complete his work. If a person is making an object of clay, who will give him any gold? It is not fitting to mix gold with clay. Therefore, all the saints, rich in gold, will together with me earn a helmet for you to have. This helmet is the intention of pleasing God alone. As a helmet protects the head from arrows and blows, so too a good intention directed toward God alone protects the soul so that the temptations of the devil do not prevail against it, and it introduces God into the soul.

The good knight George had this intention, as did Maurice and many others, including the thief who hung on the cross. Without it, no one can lay a good foundation or come to his reward. The helmet should have two openings in front of the eyes to allow one to see in advance anything approaching. These openings are discernment concerning things to be done and caution concerning things to be omitted, for, without discernment and forethought, many things that seem good at the start turn out to be bad in the end.”

The Mother asked the knight again: ”What do you still need, my son?” And he answered: ”My hands are naked and have no armor.” The Mother said: ”I will help you so that your hands will not be naked. Just as you have two bodily hands, you likewise have two spiritual ones. The right hand with which the sword is held symbolizes the work of justice. There should be five virtues like five fingers there. The first finger means that every just person must first be just to himself. This is done by guarding against anything in one's speech, action, or example that might offend one's neighbor so that one does not undo through one's own disorderly behavior what one teaches to others or justly reprehends in them. The second finger means not to carry out justice or the deeds of justice for the sake of human favor or worldly greed but for the love of God alone. The third means not to show unjust fear of anyone nor to dissemble anything out of friendship nor to swerve away from justice for anyone's sake, rich or poor, friend or foe.

The fourth means to be ready and willing to die for the sake of justice. The fifth means not only to do justice but also to love justice wisely. The result of this is that the sentence shows both mercy and justice, and the person who commits a lesser sin is corrected in one way, while the person who commits a greater is corrected in another way, and the person who sins from ignorance in one way, while the person who sins by design or malice in another way. Whoever has these five fingers should be careful not to sharpen his sword through impatience nor dull it through worldly pleasure nor drop it through imprudence or darken it through frivolity.

The left hand symbolizes godly prayer. This, too, has five fingers. The first is a firm belief in the articles of faith concerning the divine and human natures, putting it all into practice and believing all that the Holy Church, God's bride, professes. The second is the refusal to sin deliberately against God along with the desire to make reparation for all the sins you have committed through contrition and atonement. The third is to entreat God to turn the love of the flesh into a spiritual love. The fourth is living for nothing else in the world but to give glory to God and to reduce the amount of sin. The fifth is never to rely on your own strength in any way but ever to fear God and to await death at any hour. There, my son, these are the two hands you should have. With the right hand you must brandish the sword of justice against the transgressors of justice. With the left hand of prayer you must plead for God's help so that you never trust to your own righteousness nor become insolent toward God."

Blessed Mary appeared again and said to the knight: "What do you still need, my son?" He answered: "Leg armor." And she said: "Listen to me, O knight who once belonged to the world but now is mine. God created everything in heaven and on earth, but worthiest and most beautiful among the lower creatures is the soul, similar to good will in her conceptions. Just as many branches shoot forth from a tree, so too every virtuous perfection shoots forth from the soul through spiritual exercise and activity. Therefore, in order to obtain spiritual leg armor, you must, by the grace of God, begin with good will.

A twofold consideration must support your will, like two legs standing on golden bases. The perfect soul's first leg is the following consideration: that you would refuse to sin even if no punishment were to follow. The second leg consists in doing good works with great patience and love of God, even in the face of your own damnation. The knees of the soul are the cheerfulness and fortitude of a good intention. As the knees curve and bend with the use of the legs, so too the soul's intention should bend and stop in obedience to reason according to the will of God.

It is written that spirit and flesh are opposed to each other. Thus, Paul also says: 'I do not do the good I want.' It is as if he said: 'I want to do good according to the soul but I am unable because of the weakness of the flesh. Yet, what happens when I am sometimes able to do them though not cheerfully?' Shall the Apostle be deprived of his wages because he had the will but not the ability, or because he did good things but not cheerfully? Certainly not!

Rather, his reward will be increased twofold: first because, with respect to the outer man, the action was difficult for him due to the flesh's resistance to the good; second because, with respect to the inner man, he did not always receive spiritual consolation. Accordingly, many secular people work in the world but receive no reward for it, because they act out of carnal motives. If their work was a command from God, they would not be as eager to do it. These two legs of the soul, then, the refusal to sin against God and the intention of doing good works, even should damnation follow, must be equipped with a double armor, namely, the discerning use of temporal goods and the discerning desire to seek heavenly ones. The discerning use of temporal goods means possessing them for the purpose of a moderate subsistence and not in excess. The discerning desire for heavenly goods means the intention of earning heaven through good works and exertion. The human creature has turned away from God through ingratitude and sloth and must therefore return to God by work and humility. So, my son, since you do not have these, let us turn to the holy martyrs and confessors who abounded in such riches and ask them to help you."

Then the saints appeared and said: "O, Blessed Lady, you bore the Lord of life and you are the Lady of all creation. What is there that you cannot do? You wish, and it is done. Your will is always our will. You are truly the Mother of love, for you attend to everyone with love." The Mother appeared again and said to the knight: "Son, we still lack the shield. A shield needs two things: on the one hand, strength, and, on the other, the emblem of the lord under whom one is serving as a soldier. The spiritual shield signifies the consideration of God's bitter passion. This should be on your left arm next to your heart so that as often as carnal pleasure entices your mind, you may recollect the bruises of Jesus Christ. Whenever the world's disdain and opposition sting and sadden your mind, you should recall the poverty and ignominy of Christ. Whenever honors or a long life in the flesh entice you, you should call to mind Christ's bitter suffering and death.

Such a shield should possess both the strength of perseverance in goodness and the breadth of love. The emblem on the shield should be of two colors, because nothing is seen more clearly at a distance than something composed of two bright colors. The colors decorating the shield of the consideration of the divine passion are, on the one hand, self-control over disorderly emotions and, on the other hand, purity and restraint with regard to the promptings of the flesh.

Indeed, heaven is lit up by these two colors, and the angels see them and exult with joy, saying: 'Behold the sign of purity and the token of our fellowship! We must help this knight.' The demons see the knight decorated with these tokens on his shield and exclaim: 'What shall we do, fellows? This knight is fearful to encounter and gloriously armed. At his sides are the weapons of virtue, behind him stands an army of angels, at his left he has a most watchful guardian, God himself, and all around him there are plenty of eyes attentive to our wickedness. We can do battle with him only to our shame, because we can in no way prevail.' How happy is that knight whom the angels honor and in fear of whom the demons tremble! But, my son, since you have not yet acquired this shield, let us ask the holy angels who shine in spiritual purity to help you."

The Mother speaks again: "My son, we still lack a sword. A sword needs two qualities: first, it should have sharp edges and, second, it must be thoroughly sharpened. The spiritual sword is trust in God in order to fight for justice. This trust should have two edges: upright justice in prosperity, as it were, on the right edge, and thanksgiving in adversity, as it were, on the left edge. Good Job had such a sword. When he was prosperous, he offered sacrifice for his children and was like a father to the poor, and his door stood open for the wayfarer. He did not walk in the way of vanity nor covet the goods of others but feared God as the One who sits on the waves of the sea. Then again, he gave thanks in adversity. When he lost his children, when he was upbraided by his wife and afflicted with horrible boils, he bore it all with patience, saying: 'The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Lord.' This sword should be kept thoroughly sharpened by crushing the assailants of justice as did Moses and David, by showing zeal for the law like Phinehas, by speaking firmly like Elias and John. O, how many people nowadays have a very dull sword! Even if they speak in word, they lift not a finger and pay no heed to God's glory in their quest for human favor. And so, because you have no such sword, let us ask the patriarchs and prophets who had such great trust in God, and a sword shall be given to us."

The Mother appeared again and said to the knight: "My son, you are still in need of something to cover your weapons and protect them from rust and damage from rain. This covering is charity, the readiness to die for God, and even - if it were possible - to be separated from God for the sake of the salvation of one's brethren. This kind of charity covers all sins, preserves the virtues, placates God's wrath, makes all things possible, frightens demons away, and is the joy of angels. This covering should be white on the inside and gleam like gold on the outside, for wherever the zeal of divine love is found neither the one kind of purity nor the other is neglected. The apostles were full of this charity. We must ask them to help you."

The Mother appeared again and said: "My son, you still have need of a horse and saddle. The spiritual signification of the horse is baptism. Just as a horse has its four legs and carries a man on the journey he must

accomplish, so too baptism, as signified by the horse, carries a man in the sight of God and has four spiritual effects. The first effect is that the baptized are liberated from the devil and bound to the commandments and service of God. The second effect is that they are cleansed from original sin. The third is that they are made God's children and coheirs. The fourth is that heaven is opened to them.

Yet how many there are today who, having reached the age of reason, pull the reins on the horse of baptism and ride it off on a false path! The baptismal path is true and rightly followed when people are instructed and upheld in good moral habits before reaching the age of reason and when, upon reaching the age of reason and carefully considering what was promised at the baptismal font, they keep their faith and love of God intact. However, they ride away from the right path and rein the horse in when they prefer the world and the flesh to God.

The saddle of the horse or of baptism is the effect of the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, which gave baptism its efficacy. What is water if not an element? As soon as God's blood was poured out, God's word and the power of God's outpoured blood entered into the element. Thus, by the word of God, the water of baptism became the means of reconciliation between humankind and God, the gate of mercy, the expulsion of demons, the way to heaven, and the forgiveness of sins. So those who would boast of the power of baptism should first consider how the effect of baptism was instituted through bitter pain. When their mind swells up with pride against God, let them consider how bitter their redemption was, how many times they have broken their baptismal vows, and what they deserve for their relapses into sin.

In order to sit firmly in the saddle of the baptismal effect, two stirrups are needed, that is, two considerations in prayer. First one should pray in such a way: 'Lord God almighty, blessed are you who have created and redeemed me. Although I am worthy of damnation, you showed tolerance for my sins and brought me back to repentance. Lord, in the presence of your majesty, I admit that I have uselessly and culpably wasted all that you have given me for my salvation. I have wasted the time given for penance

on vanities, lent my body to excesses, and used up the grace of baptism through pride. I loved it all more than you, my creator and redeemer, my nourisher and protector. And so, I beg for your mercy, for I am wretched in myself. Because I did not acknowledge your kind patience toward me or fear your terrible equity, I gave no thought as to how I should requite you for your innumerable good gifts. Rather, day by day I sought to provoke you with my wickedness. Therefore, I have only one thing to say to you: Have mercy on me, God, according to your great mercy!

The second prayer is like this: 'Lord God almighty, I know that everything I have comes from you and that I am nothing without you and can do nothing without you other than what I myself have accomplished, which is nothing but sin. Humbly, therefore, I implore your pity. Do not deal with me according to my sins but according to your great mercy. Send your Holy Spirit to enlighten my heart and confirm me in the way of your commandments so that I may be able to persevere in that which I have come to know through your inspiration and never be separated from you by any temptations.' Therefore, my son, since you lack this, let us ask those who fixed God's passion in their hearts with greater sorrow to share their charity with you."

When this was said, a horse suddenly appeared equipped with gilt ornaments. And the Mother said: "The horse's ornaments symbolize the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given in baptism. No matter whether it is administered by a good or a bad minister, baptism takes away the ancestral offense, increases grace, pardons every sin, gives the Holy Spirit as a pledge, angels as guardians, and heaven as an inheritance. See, my son, these are the trappings of a spiritual knight. A knight who wears them will receive the ineffable wages with which he can purchase perpetual joy, most peaceful honor, eternal plenty and everlasting life."

The knight was Sir Karl, St. Bridget's son.

The bride's words of prayer and praise to Christ and the Virgin. The Virgin's consoling reply to the daughter, showing her that God in his righteous decision often lets his power become more manifest through the lies of the devil. And about how tribulations lead to spiritual benefits.

Chapter 75

“Blessed are you, my God, my Creator and Redeemer. You are the ransom through which we were freed from captivity, through which we are led toward salvation and share in the Unity and Trinity. Therefore, even if I blush over my own ugliness, yet I rejoice because you, having died once to save us, nevermore shall die. You are truly he who existed before the ages, he who has power over life and death. You alone are God, almighty and awesome. May you be blessed forever!

But what shall I say of you, O blessed Mary, the salvation of the entire world? You are like someone who has a friend saddened over something he has lost and who puts that lost possession suddenly before his eyes, thus relieving his sorrow, increasing his joy and enkindling his whole spirit with gladness. You, Mother most sweet, showed the world its God, whom men had lost. You gave birth to him who was born before time and at whose birth heaven and earth rejoiced. Therefore, sweet Mother, I ask you to help me so that my enemy may not rejoice over me nor prevail against me with his machinations.”

The Mother answered: “I shall help you. But why are you upset because one thing was shown to you spiritually and another was heard physically - I mean because that knight, who was physically alive, was shown to you as spiritually dead and in need of spiritual help? Hear now something that is certain. Every truth comes from God and every falsehood from the devil, who is the father of falsehood. Yet, although truth is from God, nevertheless, through the malice and falsehood of the devil, which God sometimes permits according to his secret decision, God's power is made more manifest, as I will show you by way of a comparison.

Once there was a maiden who tenderly loved her bridegroom, and he loved her similarly. God was glorified through their love, and the parents of both were happy. Their enemy saw it and thought to himself as follows: 'I know that bride and bridegroom come together in three ways - through

letters, through mutual conversation, and through their bodily union. Accordingly, I will fill all the roads with stakes, brambles, and hooks in order to block the access of messengers and letter carriers. In order to obstruct their conversation, I will raise a din and clatter to distract them in conversing. In order to prevent them coming together naked in bed, I will appoint guards to watch every nook and cranny so that they will have no opportunity to come together.'

The bridegroom, more astute than his enemy, realized these things and said to his servants: 'My enemy is setting traps for me in such and such places. Be on the lookout in those places, and if you discover it, let him go on working until he has laid his snares, and then swoop down on him but without killing him. Instead, shout and mock at him so that your fellow servants see the enemy's wiles and become more careful in guarding and watching.' Something similar occurs in spiritual matters. The letters by which the bridegroom and bride, that is, God and the good soul, come together are simply the prayers and aspirations of good people. Just as physical letters are an indication of the feelings and intentions of the sender, so too the prayers of good people enter into the heart of God and join the soul to God in a single bond of love. The devil, however, sometimes prevents human hearts from asking for that which is conducive to the salvation of the soul or contrary to carnal pleasure. Moreover, he prevents those who pray for other sinners from being heard, since, being sinners, they do not seek any improvement for their own souls or ask for something of everlasting worth.

The mutual conversations through which bridegroom and bride become one heart and one soul stand for nothing other than penance and contrition. Sometimes the devil raises such a din between them that they cannot hear each other. This din stands for nothing other than the devil's base suggestion to the heart desirous of performing fruitful penance. He says this through his promptings: 'O, my dainty soul, is it not hard to undertake unfamiliar and unaccustomed practices? Do you think everyone can become perfect? It is enough for you to be one of the many. Why are you attempting to do greater things? Why are you doing what no one else

does? You will not be able to persevere. Everyone will laugh you to scorn, if you lower yourself and become excessively submissive.'

Deluded by such suggestions, the soul thinks to herself: 'It is a heavy thing to give up customary habits. I will just make my confession about past sins. It is enough for me to follow the path of the majority. I am not capable of becoming perfect. Surely God is merciful. He would not have redeemed us if he wanted us to perish.' By means of this kind of din the devil prevents God from hearing the soul. It is not that God does not hear everything but that he is not pleased in hearing such talk, when the soul consents more to temptation than to her own reason.

The naked union of God and the soul stands for nothing other than the heavenly longing and the pure charity with which the soul ought to burn in every hour. This charity gets impeded in four ways. First, the devil urges the soul to do something against God that, though not counting as something serious, still delights her mind. Delight of this kind, since she makes light of it and does not bother about it, is hateful to God. Second, the devil inspires the soul to do certain good deeds in order to please others and sometimes, out of fear or for the sake of worldly honor, to omit certain good deeds that she could do. Third, the devil induces forgetfulness and listlessness in the soul with regard to the good deeds she ought to carry out, and her mind gets absorbed by this and grows weary of doing good. Fourth, the devil makes the soul grow anxious about worldly cares or needless sorrows and joys or extravagant fears.

Such things, then, obstruct the letters, that is, the prayers of the just, as well as the mutual conversation of bridegroom and bride. However, though the devil is astute, God is all the more wiser and stronger in shattering the snares of his enemy so that the letters that have been sent can reach the bridegroom.

The snares are shattered when God inspires good thoughts, and when the heart desires to have the intention of fleeing base acts and of doing deeds that are pleasing to God. The enemy's din gets dispelled when the

soul is discreetly penitent and has the intention of not repeating confessed sins.

Know that the devil not only raises a din and clatter for people hostile to God but even for God's friends. You may understand this better by way of a comparison. A maiden was once speaking with a man when a curtain appeared between them. The man saw it indeed, but not the maiden. At the end of their conversation, the maiden lifted up her eyes and saw the curtain. Frightened, she said to herself: 'God help me so that I may not be deceived by the snares of the enemy!' When the bridegroom saw the maiden's sadness, he removed the curtain and showed her the truth of the whole matter. Similarly, perfect persons may receive divine inspirations, but then the devil raises a din whenever they get puffed up with sudden pride or become downcast with excessive fear or tolerate the sins of others with inordinate condescension or grow weak through excessive joy or sadness.

Something similar has happened to you. The devil induced some men to write to you that he who was alive was dead, and you were therefore overcome with great sorrow. But God revealed to you his spiritual death, and so, for your consolation, God proved true in a spiritual sense that which was false in a physical sense as stated by those who wrote to you. You see, it is true what they say about tribulations leading to spiritual benefits. If you had not been saddened due to the lie that you had heard, such great power and spiritual beauty would not have been shown to you. For that reason, and so that you might understand God's hidden dispensation, a kind of curtain was lowered between your soul and God as he spoke, for that man's soul appeared in the shape of one in need of help, and God made this observation at the end of each locution: 'You will know in due time whether he is dead or alive.' As soon as you were shown the spiritual beauty and adornment with which a soul must be equipped in order to enter heaven, the curtain was removed, and you were shown the truth, namely, that the man was physically alive but spiritually dead, and that whoever enters the homeland of heaven must be armed in such virtues.

However, the devil's intention was to tempt you with lies and upset you in order to distract you from the love of God through sorrow over the loss of someone so dear. But as soon as you said 'God help me if this is an illusion!' then the veil was removed and both the physical and spiritual truth were revealed to you. The devil is thus permitted to afflict even the righteous in order that their reward may be increased."

The Virgin's words to the daughter showing her who God's friends are. Also about how few of them are found in modern times, no matter whether one adduces the state of the laity or of the clergy. And about why God who is rich loves poverty, and why he chose the poor and not the rich, and for what purpose riches were conceded to the church.

Chapter 76

The Mother is speaking to the bride of Christ: "Why are you troubled, my daughter?" She replies: "Because I am afraid of being sent to hardened sinners." And the Mother said: "How do you know whether they are hard-hearted or friends of God?" She said: "I do not know how to discern it. Certainly, I do not dare to judge anyone, for two men were shown to me. The first was very humble and holy in human eyes, whereas the other was prodigal and ambitious. However their intentions and will did not correspond to their deeds. They were terribly frightening to my mind."

The Mother answered: "It is permissible to the mind to make judgments based on clearly visible signs of badness in order to be able to show compassion or to make corrections. However, it is not safe for the mind to make judgments in doubtful and uncertain cases. This is why I want to indicate to you who God's friends are. Know that God's friends are those who receive God's gifts with pious fear, who are always thanking him for them and do not crave unnecessary possessions but content themselves with what they have been given.

But where are such as these to be found? Let us inquire first among the common people. Who among them says, 'I have enough, I crave

nothing more'? Let us inquire among the knights and other lords. Which of them thinks as follows: 'I inherited the goods that I have, and I require only a reasonable means of support from them as is appropriate before God and men. I shall share the rest with God and the poor. But if I should discover that my hereditary goods were ill-gotten, then I shall either restore them or submit to the decision of God's chosen spiritual servants.' Such thoughts, my daughter, are rare here on earth.

Let us also inquire among kings and generals. Who among them is in a commendable state? That man is a king who is like Job in character, like David in humility, like Phinehas in zeal for the law, like Moses in meekness and patience. That man is a general who leads the king's army and forms them for battle; who, like Joshua, has trust in God and pious fear; who, like Joab, seeks the advantage of his lord rather than his own advantage; who, like Judas Maccabees, shows zeal for the law and wants the best for his neighbor. Such a general is like a unicorn with a sharp horn on its forehead and a precious jewel beneath the horn. What does the general's horn represent if not his manly heart with which he should fight vigorously and smite the enemies of the faith? The jewel beneath his horn is the general's divine charity that remains firmly in his heart and renders him agile and invincible in every undertaking. Nowadays, however, generals are more like rampant bucks than unicorns, for they do battle everywhere for the sake of the flesh, not for the sake of their souls or for God.

Let us inquire, then, among kings. Which of them does not burden his subjects in his pride. Which of them maintains his state according to the revenues of the crown? Who restores the property that the crown retains unjustly? Who is there that takes the time to carry out justice for God's sake? My daughter, would that such kings might appear in the world to give glory to God!

Let us inquire, moreover, among the clergy who are obliged to love chastity, poverty, and piety. To be sure, they, too, have gone astray. What are priests if not God's poor almsmen? Living on the divine offering, they should be all the humbler and more fervent toward God to the extent in

which they have removed themselves from worldly cares. The church rose up from hardship and poverty in the beginning so that God might be their inheritance, and so that they might not glory in the world nor in the flesh but in God.

But, my daughter, could not God have chosen kings and rulers as apostles, and then the church would have been enriched through their earthly inheritance? He could have done so, of course, but God who is rich came into the world as a poor man in order to show that earthly possessions are fleeting, and so that men and women might learn from the Lord's example and not be ashamed of poverty but rather hasten on toward the true riches of heaven. Thus, he founded the beautiful organization of the church upon a poor fisherman and put him in his place to live in the world on divine providence and not on an inheritance.

Thus the church began with three goods: first, with zealous faith; second, with poverty; third, with the power of virtues and miracles. These three things were found in the blessed apostle Peter. He had zealous faith, when he outspokenly proclaimed his God and did not hesitate to die for him. He had poverty, too, when he went around begging and feeding himself through manual labor. Yet he showed himself to be rich in spiritual goods, which is more important, when, for example, he gave the lame man the ability to walk (which no prince could do), though he had no silver or gold to give him.

But could not Peter, who had raised dead persons to life, have obtained gold if he had wanted it? Certainly he could have, but he had unburdened himself from the burden of wealth in order to enter into heaven unencumbered, and in order that the master of the sheep might give them an example of humility, showing that humility and poverty (whether spiritual or physical) make up the way into heaven. Third, he had the power of miracles, for, apart from his greater miracles, the sick were cured by his very shadow. Because Peter possessed in himself the perfection of virtues - to oneself with necessities - his tongue became the key to heaven and his name is blessed in heaven and on earth.

However, those who invoked their own names on earth and loved dung, that is, earthly things, are forgotten on earth and receive a terrifying description in the book of justice.

Yet God wished to show that the poverty of both Peter and the other saints was not coerced but voluntary. Accordingly, he inspired many souls to give generously to them. However, the saints themselves found their glory more in poverty than in the thorns of wealth. Hence, the greater the poverty they lived in, the more abundantly their devotion increased. Is that strange?

How could those who had made God their portion and their joy be without him? Or how could those who sought worldly delights find any delight in God? He was, rather, a poor pilgrim in their eyes. In the course of time, however, in order that God's friends might be more fervent and ready to preach the word of God, and in order that people might know that it is not riches that are bad but only their abuse, temporal goods were granted to the church under the papacies of Silvester and others. These were for a long time used by the holy men only for their own necessities as well as for those of God's friends and for the sustenance of the poor.

Know, therefore, that God's friends are those who are content with God's dispensation. Even if they are not known to you, my Son has a keen perception of them. Gold is indeed often found in hard metal, and one can get a spark of fire out of flint. Go on, then, without worrying. Clamoring comes before doing. Not even when my Son was in the flesh did he convert all of Judea at once, nor did the apostles convert the Gentiles once and for all. No, longer time is needed for carrying out the work of God."

The bride's words to Christ declaring the great mercy that he had shown her. Christ's words to the bride confirming his same sweet mercy toward her. And about how he chose her as a vessel to be filled with wine in order to give God's servants through her wine to drink. Also, the bride's thankful and humble answer to Christ.

Chapter 77

“Honor to God almighty for all his creation! Praise to him for all his virtue! May glorious service be rendered him for all his charity! I, unworthy person, who have sinned so much against you, my God, from my youth, I thank you, my most sweet God, and especially because there is none so criminal that you deny him mercy, provided he asks you for mercy with love and true humility and a purpose of amendment.

O God most loving and sweetest of all! What you have done for me is wonderful for all those who hear of it. Whenever you please, you put my body to sleep - yet not with a bodily sleep but with a spiritual rest. Then you rouse my soul to life as though from sleep so that I hear and feel in a spiritual way. O, Lord, how sweet are the words of your mouth! It truly seems to me, as often as I hear the words of your Spirit, that my soul within me swallows them with an indescribably sweet sensation like that from the sweetest food that seems to drop into my heart with great joy and indescribable consolation. It seems wonderful to me that while I listen to your words, I am made both fully satisfied and yet still hungry. I feel satisfied because nothing else pleases me but your words. Yet I feel hungry because my appetite for them keeps increasing. So, blessed are you, my God, Jesus Christ! Give me your help, Lord, so that I may be able all the days of my life to do the things pleasing to you!”

Christ answered, saying: “I have neither beginning nor end. All things were created by my power and arranged by my wisdom. Everything is governed by my decision, and nothing is impossible for me, and all my works have been established with love. For this reason, that heart is exceedingly hard that does not want to love or fear me, although I am the nourisher and judge of all. Yet people do the will of the devil, my own executioner and the betrayer of humankind. He has given them such pestilent poison to drink in this world that a soul, once tasting it with pleasure, cannot live but falls down dead to hell and yet will live forever in misery. This is the poison of sin that, though it tastes sweet to many, yet in the end it will turn out to be horribly bitter. This venom is most assuredly drunk with pleasure all the time from the devil's hand. Who ever heard of

such a strange thing? People are offered life, and yet they choose and voluntarily embrace death.

However, I, the most powerful being of all, have compassion on their great misery and anguish. I acted like a rich and loving king who sent expensive wine to his intimate servants, saying: 'Give this wine to many others besides yourselves to drink, for it is very healthful. It grants health to the sick, comfort to the downhearted, and a brave heart to those who are healthy.

Nor is the wine sent without a flask. This is indeed what I have done in this kingdom. To my servants I sent my words, which can be compared to the best of wine, and they shall give them to others, because my words are healthful.

By the flask I mean you, who are hearing my words. You have done both things, for you have heard and delivered my words. You are my flask. I shall fill you whenever I like and drain you whenever I please. Thus, my Spirit will show you where you should go and what you should say. May you fear no one but me. You must gladly go anywhere I wish and boldly say whatever I command you, for nothing can withstand me. I will be there with you."

Then the bride said: "I heard this voice, and I answered with tears: O, my Lord God, I who am like the least little midge in the face of your majesty, I ask your permission to reply to you." The voice answered, saying: "I knew your reply before you yourself thought of it. But I give you my permission to speak." The bride then said: "I answered: King of all glory, infuser of all wisdom, worker of all virtue, indeed virtue itself, why for such a mission do you wish to select me, who have wasted my body in sin, who am no wiser than a donkey and incapable of virtuous action? Please do not be angry with me, sweet Lord Jesus Christ, because I put such a question to you. One should never be surprised about anything from you, for you are able to do whatever you want, but I am surprised concerning myself, for I have offended you in many ways and made but little reparation."

The voice answered, saying: "I will answer you with a comparison. If various coins were offered to a rich and powerful king, and the king was then to have them melted down and recast into whatever shape he wanted, such as crowns or rings from the coins of gold, plates and drinking glasses from the coins of silver, pots and pans from the coins of copper, which the king could then use for his own comfort and adornment, why should you be surprised if he had done so? Therefore you should not be any more surprised if I take the hearts of my friends, which they have freely offered to me, and make what I want out of them. Though some of them have more sense and others less, still, when they offer me their hearts, I use some of them for one thing, others for another, but all of them for my glory and honor, for the righteous heart is a coin that pleases me greatly.

Thus do I arrange the things that are mine in whatever way I like. And, since you are mine, you should not be surprised at the things I want to do with you. Rather, be steadfast and firm in perseverance and willing to do whatever I command. I am powerful enough to provide you everywhere with all the things you need."

The bride's divinely revealed words or, rather, words from the sweet mouth of the glorious Virgin, promulgated clearly, directly, and in an unveiled manner; instructing and comforting the bride, and about how these words must be transmitted to the pope, the vicar of the Lord, and how they warn of the downfall of the church.

Chapter 78

Honorable Father, I, a widow, declare that many, very amazing revelations were made to a certain woman while she resided in her homeland. After having been submitted to the diligent examination of bishops and learned religious and secular priests, these revelations were shown to have come from the holy and miraculous enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and from no other source. Even the king and queen of the realm acknowledged this on the basis of credible proof. Moreover, the same woman journeyed abroad to the city of Rome, where, when praying

one day in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, she was caught up in a spiritual vision, while her body seemed to fall into a torpor, though not the torpor of sleep.

At that moment the most venerable Virgin appeared to her. The aforementioned woman was troubled with perplexity at the vision. Recognizing her own frailty, she feared some deception by the devil, and she inwardly besought God's mercy not to let her fall into diabolical temptations. However, the Virgin who appeared to her said: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to see and hear, thinking they come from the evil spirit. Just as light and heat accompany the approach of the sun but do not follow after a dark shadow, in the same way two things accompany the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart: ardent love for God and a perfect illumination of the Catholic faith. You are experiencing both these things now: You feel that you love nothing but God and that not a single point is lacking to you of the wholeness of the Catholic faith. These two things do not follow upon the evil spirit, whom we can liken to a dark shadow."

Then the Virgin went on and said to the woman: "You must send a message from me to a certain prelate." The woman answered her with great sadness: "My reverend Virgin, he will not believe me but will, I think, regard my words with scorn rather than as divine truth." The Virgin answered her, saying: "Although I know the disposition of his heart well enough and how he will delay in answering, as well as how he will end his life, you should still send him the following message.

I would have him know that the foundation of the Holy Church is so heavily deteriorated on its right side that its vaulted roof has many cracks at the top, and that this causes the stones to fall so dangerously that many of those who pass beneath it lose their lives. Several of the columns that should be standing erect are almost level with the ground, and even the floor is so full of holes that blind people entering there take dangerous falls. Sometimes it even happens that, along with the blind, people with good eyesight have bad falls because of the dangerous holes in the floor. Because of all this, the church of God is tottering dangerously. The result

of this will shortly be seen. I assure you that she will suffer a downfall if she does not receive the help of repairs.

And her downfall will be so great that it will be heard throughout all of Christendom. All this is to be taken in a spiritual sense.

I am the Virgin into whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter, without the least contagious trace of carnal pleasure. The Son of God was born from my closed womb, giving me solace but no pain at all. I stood next to the cross when he victoriously overcame hell through his patient suffering and opened up heaven with the blood of his heart. I was also on the mountain when God's Son, who is also my Son, ascended into heaven. I have the clearest knowledge of the whole of the Catholic faith, which he preached and taught to everyone desirous of entering heaven. Now I stand over the world in continuous prayer, like a rainbow above the clouds that appears to bend toward the earth and touch it with both its ends.

I see myself as a rainbow bending down toward both the good and the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of my continual prayers. I bend down toward good people in order that they may be steadfast in the commandments of the Holy Church, and I bend down toward bad people in order that they may not add to their wickedness and grow worse. I would have the man to whom I send this message know that foul and horrible clouds are rising up in one direction against the shining rainbow. By these clouds I mean those who lead a life of carnal debauchery, those who are as insatiable as the ocean chasm in their greed for money. They arrogantly and irrationally spend their means as wastefully as a torrential stream pours out its water. Many of the overseers of the church are guilty of these three things, and their abominable and befouled sins rise up to heaven in the sight of God, as much opposed to my prayers as foul clouds are opposed to the bright rainbow. These men, who should be placating God's wrath along with me, are instead provoking it against themselves. Such men should not be promoted but rejected in God's church.

As the Queen of Heaven, I will come to the aid of anyone who, knowing his own insufficiency, is willing to take on the task of making the

church's foundation stable and its floor level, and who desires to restore the blessed vineyard that God founded with his blood. Together with the angels, I shall root up loose roots and throw each and every fruitless tree into the fire to burn, and I shall plant fruitful shoots in their stead. By this vineyard I mean the Holy Church of God in which the two virtues of humility and divine charity must be restored.”

The glorious Virgin, who appeared to the woman, commanded that all this be sent to you, Reverend Father. I, who have sent this letter to you, swear by Jesus, true and almighty God, and by his most worthy Mother Mary, that I have not sent this letter for the sake of any worldly honor or favor, so help me body and soul! I have sent it because that same woman, to whom many other words have been spoken in spiritual revelation, was commanded to make all this known to your Excellency.

The noteworthy preface to the useful instruction about the conduct of life that Christ prescribed to the bride for a priest attached to her, containing many excellent points.

Chapter 79

Praise and glory to almighty God for all his works! Everlasting honor to him who has begun to work his grace in you. When the earth is covered with snow and frost, we surely see that the seeds sown in it cannot germinate in any but those very few places warmed by the rays of the sun where plants and flowers spring up through the sun's doing. The nature and inherent virtue of the seeds can be discerned from these.

In a similar way, the whole world seems to me to be covered now with the hard frost of pride and greed and lust, so much so that, alas, there are very few people in whose hearts the perfect love of God can dwell, to judge from their words and deeds. One can thus be sure that just as God's friends rejoiced when they saw Lazarus raised from the dead for the glory of God, so too now God's friends rejoice whenever they see someone rise

from the three aforementioned vices, which truly constitute an eternal death.

One should also note that, just as Lazarus incurred a twofold enmity after his resurrection (for he had both physical enemies, that is, people who were God's enemies and who hated Lazarus in a physical manner, and spiritual enemies, that is, the devils, who never want to be God's friends, and these hated him in a spiritual manner), so too all those who now rise up from mortal sins, wishing to keep chaste and to flee pride and greed, also incur a double enmity.

God's human enemies want to inflict a twofold physical harm on them. The devils, too, try to injure and hurt them in a twofold way spiritually. First of all worldly people reproach them with their words. Second, if they can, they also cause them trouble with their deeds, trying to make them like themselves in their action and conduct and to draw them away from their good undertakings. However, this man of God, newly converted to the spiritual life, can easily overcome these ill-willed people, if he remains patient in the face of the words directed against him, and if he then carries out his good deeds of a spiritual and divine character even more frequently and fervently in their sight.

The devils rely on two other methods of foiling him. Their great desire, first of all, is to make God's new servant fall back into sin. If they are unable to do this, then they apply themselves to the task of getting him to carry out his good works in an unreasonable and imprudent manner, such as imprudent fasting or keeping vigil beyond due measure. Their intention is to wear out his energy and thus make him weaker in God's service. The best remedy for the first danger is the frequent and wholesome confession of his sins and the true, inner contrition of his heart over his failings. The best remedy for the second danger is a humility of the kind that makes him rather obey some experienced spiritual director than make his own personal decisions about what to do and what penances to carry out. This medicine is indeed so beneficial and excellent that, even if the giver of advice is less worthy than the receiver, one can have the very sure hope of the cooperation of divine wisdom, that is, God himself,

to help that giver of advice to give the advice most useful to the receiver, provided both of them have the perfect desire of acting for the honor and glory of God.

Now then, my beloved friend, since both of us have gotten ourselves up from our sins, let us ask God to deign to grant his help to both of us - to me in speaking, to you in obeying. We must beseech God for his help all the more because you, who are rich, wise, and noble, have condescended to ask the advice of me, who am unworthy, ignorant, and not very intelligent. I truly hope that God shall want to have regard for your humility and make what I write to you in his honor beneficial to you both in body and in soul.

Wise and profitable teaching to a certain priest concerning how he should conduct his life both spiritually and bodily, given by the bride of Christ, inspired in her by God.

Chapter 80

I advise you first to stay in your lodgings close to your church of the Holy Virgin Mary. You should have only one servant with you. After you have subtracted the necessary expenses from your income, you should return whatever is left over to your creditors and repay your debts in full. It is not right or reasonable to give a lot of money to the poor or to wealthy friends and relatives until all your debts have been resolved. Once you have completely resolved your debts, then - after subtracting the expenses for you and your servant - distribute everything that is left over to the poor and needy.

You should have good and serviceable clerical attire, taking good care of it so no vanity or ostentation can be noted in the quality of the cloth or the style of your clothes beyond honest necessity and physical usefulness. Be content with only two sets of clothes - one for feast days and one for ordinary days - and no more than two sets of shoes and stockings. Convert

any superfluous clothes that you have to other uses or use them to payoff your debts. This year, give up linen garments altogether both at nighttime and during the day.

This year, consider your church, St. Mary's, as a cloistered church for the following three reasons. First because, if perhaps you ever remained there before for any proud motive, so in the future you should reside there out of divine obedience in honor of the most humble Virgin Mary. And if perhaps the canons and those holding benefices at this church ever led you with shameful words away from the service of God and toward evil desire, you should now try with God's help and by using divine and spiritual words to lead people away from evil desire and toward the delightful love for God. If perhaps you ever before set a bad example to anyone who saw you behaving yourself in an unpermissible fashion, you should now take care to present a profitable and virtuous example to their souls through your good deeds and upright behavior.

Next, my dear friend, you must plan your daytime and nighttime wisely and efficiently for the glory of God. I have indeed noticed that your church bells ring accurately at the appointed hours. As soon as you hear them at night, then, I advise you to get up immediately from your place and recall the five wounds of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of his most worthy Mother with five genuflections and five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. Afterward you should begin the matins of the Blessed Virgin and say other prayers that you like until the canons gather in the choir for chant. It is better that you come to the church among the first rather than the last. You should sing the matins of the season devoutly, standing properly until the end and sitting whenever it is correct to do so, but not speaking at all unless you are asked something, and then only answering with a few quiet words and no sign of anger or impatience if you can avoid it. You would conduct yourself with proper order if you were in the presence of some temporal or earthly lord. Likewise, with all the more propriety and modesty and humble reverence, both inward and outward, you should stand in the presence and service of the eternal King of heaven who is always and everywhere present and sees everything.

If you happen to be compelled by some necessity to speak about important matters touching you or someone else during these half-hours, go out of the choir and give your opinion in few words without raising your voice while outside it and then return to your place there without delay. If possible, arrange to have the matter dealt with at another place and time in order not to diminish or impede the divine worship and the glory given to God. Take care not to wander about the church as though you are taking a walk, promenading hither and thither, while the hours are being sung. Such behavior belongs to an unstable and wandering mind and a lukewarm spirit with little love and devotion.

In the intervening time, that is, between the singing of the hours, devote yourself to prayer or read something devout or useful for your mind or beneficial for others, making constantly sure, from the hour in which you get up out of your bed for matins until high mass has been finished, that you do not become voluntarily involved in anything but chant, reading, prayer, or study, unless it happens that you must discuss or deal with certain matters in your chapter concerning the affairs of the church, either with improvements or organization. Once high mass has been celebrated, it is quite suitable to speak and converse about the needs and comfort of the body or good and virtuous recreations.

When you go to table, you should say grace. Whether you are someone else's guest or have guests yourself, speak first of God or his most worthy Mother or some saint during the meal for the edification and benefit of your table companions as well as those serving the food - at least a word or two or even ask the others something relating to God or his Mother or God's saints. Do likewise even when you are alone at table and your servant is attending you, and let some such reading be made of the kind customary among brothers dining together in a monastery. Once you are done eating and have given thanks to God and to your benefactors, speak a short while with whatever upright individuals you please. about any matters or business concerning yourself. Afterward, go directly to your chamber, genuflect five times and say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in remembrance of the wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ and the sorrows of his Mother. Use half of the time remaining until vespers for

studying or reading and some form of rest, unless you are hindered by your friends due to matters concerning them. Use the other half of the same time period to take a walk for the proper relaxation of your body, so that you become stronger for the glory of God.

When it rings for vespers, enter directly into the choir of the church to chant the office in the manner described above. Once the complines have been said, pray the vigils each day for the dead along with the three readings before supper. After supper, carry out the same practices as mentioned above after lunch. After you have said grace, take a walk and spend the time having a profitable and pleasant conversation until you feel like going to bed. Even then, before going to sleep, place yourself in front of your bed and there pray devoutly five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ. After that, get into your bed and give your body enough sleep and rest that you are not overcome by sleepiness during times of vigil due to too little sleep and rest. Every Friday pray the seven psalms and the litany with devotion, and on that day give five silver coins to five poor and needy persons in veneration of the five wounds of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, my dear brother and friend, I advise you to keep abstinence in the following way this year in penance for your sins. Every day throughout Lent and likewise during Advent, your fast should consist of only one meal of fish. On the eves of the feast days of Holy Mary, eat a meal of bread and water; on the eves of the feast days of the apostles, a meal of fish. Each Wednesday, let it be one meal of cheese, eggs, and fish. Each Friday, let it be a meal only of bread and wine - and if you prefer to have water rather than wine, I will not dissuade you - and each Saturday, eat fish and oil for your one midday meal. On Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, eat two meals of meat, provided the church has not prescribed fasting.

Please observe, dear brother, that I have decided to give you this advice and write all this to you for three reasons. First of all, in order that the envy and cunning of the devil may not induce you to wear yourself out so quickly that your strength and wits soon begin to weaken and make

your whole life become of less service to God than it should be. Second, if worldly people notice any failure of wit or strength in you due to overwork, or if they see you growing weary in the work you have undertaken, then they may take fright and shrink from subjecting themselves to God's work. Third, because I trust that your work will be more pleasing to God the more you submit yourself humbly to the advice of another than govern yourself according to your own personal judgment.

The Virgin's reply, I believe, to the bride concerning three men for whom the bride was interceding before God. Tears that are meritorious and tears that are not. About how love for God grows through meditation on the humility of Christ. And how fear (not filial or initial fear) may be good.

Chapter 81

“That man is like a sack of grain from which one grain is removed but ten are added. The man you are praying for is just like that. He gives up one sin out of fear but adds ten for the sake of worldly esteem. Concerning the second man for whom you are making petitions, I answer you that it is not customary to add expensive seasoning to putrid meat. You may be praying for him to be given bodily tribulation for the good of his soul, but his own will is contrary to your petition. He longs for worldly honors, you see, and desires great wealth rather than spiritual poverty, and sensual pleasure is sweet to him. This is why his soul is putrid and fetid in my sight. Therefore he has no right to the expensive seasoning that consists in the tribulations of justice.

Furthermore, concerning the third man in whose eyes you see tears, my answer to you is that you see his body but I behold his heart. Sometimes you see a dark cloud climbing up from the earth and hanging in the sky beneath the sun, bringing on the triple precipitation of rain, snow, and hail. Then the cloud vanishes, for it has arisen out of the impurity of the earth. Every man fed on sin and sensual pleasure up to his old age resembles such a Cloud. When old age comes, then he begins to fear death and to think about his danger, yet sin still delights his mind.

Thus, as a cloud climbs up in the sky from the impurity of earth, so the conscience of such a man climbs up out of the impurity of the body (the impurity, that is, of sin) to self-examination and gives off three kinds of tears in his own regard. The first tears may be compared to water. They are for the things the man loved carnally, for example, when he loses his friends or temporal goods or his own health. Because he feels bitter about God's plans and the things he allows to happen, he sheds many unwise tears. The second kind of tears can be compared to snow.

When a man begins to think about the imminent danger to his body and the pain of death and the misery of hell, then he starts to weep - not from love but from fear. And so, just as snow quickly melts away, such tears, too, melt away quickly. The third kind of tears can be likened to hail. When a man considers how sweet sensual pleasure has been and still is to him, and that he will lose it, and also what great consolation there is in heaven, then he starts to weep over the price of damnation and of his own loss. He does not bother to weep over the dishonor done to God whenever God loses a soul redeemed by his blood, nor does he care whether he will see God after death or not. He only wants to obtain some dwelling in heaven or on earth where he will not feel any pain but can have his pleasure forever. Such tears are quite properly compared to hail, for the heart of such a man is exceedingly hard and has no warmth of love for God. Tears such as these do not bring a soul to heaven.

However, I will show you now the tears that do bring a soul to heaven. They may be compared to dew. Vapor sometimes arises from the sweetness of the earth and ascends in the sky, climbing up just beneath the sun. It turns into moisture through the heat of the sun and descends again to earth, rendering all the things that grow upon the earth fruitful. You call this dew, and it can be seen on the petals of roses, which, exposed to heat, first give off moisture from themselves and then the moisture drips down. This happens, too, in the case of a spiritual man. Each person who meditates on that blessed earth, that is, on the body of Christ, and on those words that Christ himself uttered, and on the great grace he conferred on the world and the bitter pain he bore, moved by the fire of his love for our

souls, then that person's love for God rises up with great sweetness to his brain, which can be likened to the heavenly sky. His heart, which can be compared to the sun, becomes filled with divine warmth, and his eyes with tears, weeping for his offenses against such an infinitely good and kind God, preferring to suffer any kind of pain for the glory of God rather than to have any kind of delight but to be without God.

Such tears may well be compared to the falling dew, for they provide the strength to carry out good deeds and lead to fruit in the sight of God. Just as growing flowers attract the falling dew, and the flower is embraced in dew, so too the tears shed out of the love for God enclose God in the soul and God attracts the soul to himself. However, it is good to be fearful for two reasons. First of all, because such good deeds can be performed out of fear in such a way that they later introduce a spark of grace into the heart and thus obtain charity. You might understand this by way of a similitude. It is as when a goldsmith places pure gold on the scales, and the collier comes and says: 'Sir, I have the coal you need for your work. Pay me the price it is worth.' The goldsmith answers: 'The value of coal is set at a fixed price.' So the goldsmith pays the price in gold and uses the coal he needs for his work, while the collier takes the gold as his means to live on.

So it also is in spiritual matters. Deeds done without charity are like coals, and charity is like gold. People who perform good deeds out of fear but with a desire of earning the salvation of their souls through them, even though they do not desire God in heaven but only fear being lodged in hell, still have deeds that are good, albeit cold and like coal in God's sight. God, however, can be compared to the goldsmith. He knows how to reward good deeds with spiritual justice and with what kind of justice the charity of God may be earned. He arranges it so in his providence that, because of good deeds done out of fear, people can be granted the charity that they may use for the salvation of their souls. Accordingly, as the charitable goldsmith makes use of coal in his work, so God makes use of cold deeds for his glory.

The second reason why it is good to be fearful is that people will be freed from punishment in hell for all the sins they have omitted out of fear.

However, inasmuch as they lack charity, they do not possess the righteousness needed to ascend to heaven. A person whose will is such that, if he only could, he would want to live forever in the world, does not possess love for God at all. God's deeds are as if it were dark to him. He therefore sins mortally and will be sentenced to hell. Nevertheless, he is not bound to burn in torment but will sit in the shadows, since he omitted sin out of fear. He will not, however, know the joy of heaven because he did not desire it while he lived. For that reason, he will sit like a blind and deaf man and like a man without hands or feet, because his soul understands the evil of hell, yet very little of the joy that is in heaven.”

EXPLANATION

This revelation concerns three knights. The first was from Skåne. The following revelation was made concerning him: Lady Bridget saw a soul dressed as it were in twice-dyed scarlet cloth but splattered with a few black spots. As soon as she saw the soul, it vanished from her sight. Again after three days she saw the same soul entirely red and shining with gems like glittering gold. While she was wondering at this, the Spirit of God said: "This soul was held back by worldly cares but possessed true faith. He came for the indulgences obtainable at Rome with the intention of gaining divine charity and favor and with the desire of not sinning knowingly anymore.

Your vision of the soul dressed in twice-dyed scarlet cloth means that before the death of his body he did gain divine favor but only imperfectly. That his soul was splattered with black spots means that he felt the pull of physical affection for his parents and the desire to see his homeland. However, he entrusted his entire will to me. His soul therefore deserved to be cleansed and prepared for more sublime things. The gems glittering against the red color signifies that the soul was approaching its desired reward because of its goodwill as well as because of the effect of the indulgences.

See and consider then, my daughter, what good the indulgences of this city do for those people who come here with a holy intention for the sake

of those very indulgences. Even if a million years were granted to someone - as indeed they are granted because of the faith and devotion of those who come here - still it would not be enough to earn them divine charity without God's grace. This charity, however, is truly given and earned due to the indulgences that my saints merited with their blood."

In regard to the second knight in the same revelation, who was from Halland, God's Son says: "What did that pompous windbag tell you? Was it not that many people have doubts about the truth of the relic of my face cloth? Reply firmly to him with the four things I tell you now. The first is that many people lay up treasure but do not know for whom. The second is that every person entrusted with the Lord's talent who does not spend it cheerfully will incur a judgment. The third is that a person who loves land and flesh more than God will not join the company of those who hunger and thirst for justice. The fourth is that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard. Concerning the relic of my face cloth, have him know that just as the sweat of my blood flowed from my body when my suffering was imminent and I prayed to the Father, so too sweat flowed from my face onto the cloth because of the quality of the woman who prayed to me and for the solace of future generations."

The third knight in the same revelation was from Sweden. The following revelation concerns him: "It is written that an unbelieving husband is saved by a believing wife. The wife of this man ran and snatched her husband from the jaws of the devil with her own two hands. She snatched him from the devil with one of her hands, that is, with her tears and prayers and works of mercy. She snatched him with her other hand, that is, with her warnings and example and instruction with the result that he already draws near to the way of salvation. Accordingly, he should consider three things written in the common law. There are three sections in it. One is entitled 'on owning,' another is called 'on selling,' the third is 'on buying.'

In the first section on owning, it says that nothing is justly owned unless it is justly acquired. Any acquisition made by means of devious tricks or occasions of malice or at too low a price is not pleasing to God.

The second section is called 'on selling.' Sometimes a thing is sold due to poverty or fear, sometimes due to violence or unfair settlements. A person must examine his conscience to see if there is compassion and mercy in his heart. The third section is called 'on buying.' Anyone who wants to buy something should look into the matter to see if the item to be sold has been justly acquired. It is not legally acceptable when something has been acquired by means of unjust exaction. So let this man examine these three matters in his mind.

May he understand that he will render an account to me for everything and especially for the possessions left to him by his parents, if perhaps he has used them more for the world's sake than for God's and beyond their proper use. Have him understand that he will render to me an account of his knighthood - his intention in receiving it, the way he lived it, and the way he has fulfilled the vow that he vowed to me.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that a devout soul like a bride should have a lovely mouth, clean ears, modest eyes, and a steadfast heart. He gives a very beautiful spiritual explanation of all the body parts mentioned.

Chapter 82

The Son speaks: ”Like a bride, you should have a lovely mouth, clean ears, modest eyes, and a steadfast heart. A soul, too, should have the same qualities. Her mouth is her clean mind where nothing but what pleases me may enter. May her mouth, that is, her mind be lovely with the odor of good thoughts from the attentive recollection of my passion. May her mind also be like a mouth that is red with the fervor of divine charity so as to put what it understands into effect. As sure as no one longs to kiss a colorless mouth, neither does a soul please me at all unless she performs good deeds of her own good will alone. Like a mouth, her mind should have two lips, that is, these two affections: a longing for heavenly things, and scorn for all earthly things. Her lower palate should be the fear of death that separates the soul from the body and fear of the state in which she will

then find herself. Her upper palate should be a fear of the terrible judgment.

The soul's tongue should keep itself between these two palates. What is the soul's tongue if not the frequent consideration of my mercy? Therefore, when you meditate on my mercy and how I created and redeemed you, how patient I am with you, consider also what a strict judge I am and how I do not leave anything unpunished, and consider, too, how uncertain the hour of death is. The soul's eyes should be as innocent as those of a dove that sees a hawk close by the waters. In other words, may your thoughts be ever on my love and my sufferings, and on the deeds and words of my chosen ones. With their help you will understand how the devil is capable of deceiving you, and so you never can be sure of yourself. Your ears should be clean so that you do not wish to hear vulgar and ludicrous things. Your heart should be steadfast so that you do not fear death by keeping the faith nor blush at the world's reproaches nor worry about the loss of your body for the sake of me, your God.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she should love him as a good servant loves his master, as a good son loves his father, and as a faithful wife loves her husband from whom she ought never to be separated. He gives a spiritual and profitable explanation of all this.

Chapter 83

The Son speaks: "I love you as a good master loves his servant, as a father his son, as a husband his wife. The master says to his servant: 'I shall give you clothing, proper food, and a moderate amount of work. The father says to his son: 'All I have is yours. The husband says to his wife: 'Your rest is my rest, your comfort is my comfort.'

How will these three respond to so much love? The servant, if he is good, will certainly say to his master: 'My condition is that of a servant, so I would rather serve you than anyone else.' The son will say to his father: 'I get every good thing from you, so I do not want to be separated from you.'

The wife will say to her husband: 'I am supported by your work; I have the warmth of your breast and the sweetness of your words, so I would rather die than be separated from you.'

I, God, am the husband. The soul is indeed my bride, and she should be comforted in my rest and refreshed with the food of my divinity. For her part, she ought to bear every torment rather than be separated from me, for she can receive neither comfort nor honor apart from me. Two things pertain to matrimony: first, the means a married couple needs for their support; second, a son to receive their inheritance - they may also have a servant to attend to them - for it is written that Abraham was troubled about not having a son.

The soul has her means of support when she is full of virtue. She also has a son when she possesses wise discretion in order to be able to discern between virtues and vices, and when her discernment is according to God. She also has a servant, that is, her physical emotions. This servant does not live according to the concupiscence of the flesh but for the benefit of the body and the perfection of the soul.

I love you, thus, as a husband loves his wife, for your rest is my rest. It belongs to you, therefore, to bear freely any hardship rather than provoke me to anger. I love you, too, as a father loves his son, for I have given you discretion and free will. I love you, moreover, as a master loves his servant, and I have commanded you to maintain a moderate amount of necessary goods and a reasonable workload. But that servant, the body, is so foolish that he would rather serve the devil than me, and the devil never gives him rest from the cares of the world.”

Christ speaks to the bride and describes three men who fell because of women. The first is compared to a crowned donkey. The second had the heart of a hare, and the third is compared to a basilisk. Woman must therefore always be subject to man.

Chapter 84

The Son speaks: "Three men are said to have fallen because of women. The first was a king whose lover struck him on the face when he did not smile at her. This is because he was a fool and could not restrain her nor cared about his own honor. He was like a donkey wearing a crown - a donkey because of his foolishness, a crown because of his rank. The second was Samson who, though the strongest of men, was beaten by a woman. He had the heart of a hare, since he was unable to master a single woman. The third was Solomon who was like a basilisk that kills by a glance but is killed by a mirror. Thus, the wisdom of Solomon exceeded all the rest, yet a woman's looks slew him. Woman must therefore be subject to man."

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that two pages of a book are opened before him. Mercy is written three times on one page, justice on the other. He warns her to be converted to mercy while she still has time so that she will not afterward be punished by justice.

Chapter 85

The Son speaks to the bride: "I am the creator of the universe. Two pages, as it were, lie open before me. Mercy is written on the one, justice on the other. Mercy is, accordingly, pronounced to anyone who repents of his sins and resolves to sin no more, for my Spirit shall inspire him to perform good works. Whoever freely desires to be separated from the vanities of this world is made more fervent by my Spirit. The person who is even ready to die for me will be so inflamed by my Spirit that he will be wholly in me and I in him.

Justice is written on the other page. This says: 'The Father will not defend nor will the Son reconcile nor will the Spirit inflame anyone who does not rectify himself while there is time but who knowingly turns away from God.' Therefore, while there still is time, meditate carefully on the page of Mercy, for all who are saved will be cleansed either by water or by

fire, that is, either by a small amount of penance in the present time or by the fire of purgatory in the future, until they are purged.

Know that I showed these two pages of the book of Mercy and Justice to a man whom you know. However, he scorns the page of my mercy and thinks that the left side is the right side. Like a heron over sparrows, he seeks to rise above everyone else. So he should fear for himself because, if he does not watch out, he will die in his scorn and be taken away from this world along with the drinkers and scoffers.”

So it also turned out afterward. He got up contented from the dinner table but was killed at night by his enemies.

The Mother of God says that she is like a flower from which bees gather sweet honey. The bees are the servants and chosen ones of God who continually gather the nectar of grace from her and who have spiritual wings and spiritual feet and a spiritual sting.

Chapter 86

The Mother speaks: ”I am the Queen and Mother of mercy. My Son, the creator of the universe, feels such sweet affection toward me that he has given me a spiritual understanding of all creatures. I am thus very like a flower from which bees gather sweet nectar in the greatest abundance. No matter how much they gather from it, there still remains nectar on it. So too I am able to gain grace for everyone and yet always abound in grace.

My chosen ones are indeed like bees, for they love me with all devotion and care for my honor. Like bees they have two feet, for they have a continual desire to increase my honor and also labor assiduously for it, working all they can. They have two wings as well, in that they consider themselves unworthy to praise me and also are obedient in all that refers to my honor. They even have a sting and die if they lose it.

Yes, the friends of God's have the tribulations of the world that, for the safeguarding of the virtues, will not be taken away from them until the end of their lives. Yet I, who abound in consolation, shall console them.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she should keep her body beautiful and unblemished. He compares all the parts of the body in a spiritual sense to the perfect love of God and of neighbor, especially of the friends of God. He adds that she should do in a spiritual way what the phoenix does in a physical way, that is, to collect wood and burn herself up.

Chapter 87

The Son speaks to the bride: ”I told you earlier that you should have limpid eyes in order to see the evil you have done and the good you have neglected to do. Let your mouth, that is, your mind, be clean of all evil. Its lips are the two desires you should have: the desire to give everything up for my sake and the will to remain with me. These lips should be red in color, for red is the most becoming of colors and can be seen from farthest away. Color signifies beauty, and all beauty is found in the virtues, because it is more acceptable to God when someone offers that which he or she loves the most and that which is more spiritually edifying for others. Therefore, whether in affections or with deeds, a person should give to God that which he or she holds dearest. It can be read that God rejoiced when his work was completed. God rejoices, too, whenever a person offers his or her whole self up to him with the intention of living according to God's will whether in suffering or in joy.

Your arms should be flexible and agile with respect to God's honor. The left arm represents the contemplation of my favors and the good I have done for you by creating and redeeming you, as well as of your own ingratitude toward me. The right arm is a love so fervent for me that you would rather suffer torment than lose me or provoke me to anger. Willingly I take my rest between these two arms, and your heart shall be my heart, for I am like a fire of divine love, and I want to be loved fervently there in your arms. The ribs that protect your heart are your parents - not your

natural parents but my chosen ones whom you should love like me and more than you love your own parents. They are truly your parents, for they have caused you to be born again to life eternal.

The skin of the soul should be so beautiful as not to have any blemish. The skin here stands for your every neighbor whom, if you love him as yourself, my love and the love of my saints is kept inviolate. However, if you hate him, then your heart gets injured and your ribs are stripped away, that is, the love of my saints will become smaller in you. Your skin should be without a blemish, for you ought not to hate your neighbor but to love everyone according to God's will, for then my whole heart will be with your heart.

I was saying to you earlier that I want to be loved fervently, for I am like a fire of divine love. There are three marvelous things about my fire. First, it burns but is never enkindled; second, it is never extinguished; third, it burns but is never consumed. In this way, my love for humankind existed from the beginning in my divine nature. When I assumed my human nature, it burned even more. It burns so intensely that it is never extinguished but renders the soul fervent, not consuming her but strengthening her ever more. You may gather this from the example of the phoenix. In old age she gathers wood on a high mountain. Then, once the wood is set aflame from the heat of the sun, she throws herself into the fire and, having thus died, comes back to life through that very fire. So too the soul, set aflame by the fire of divine charity, emerges from it like the phoenix better and stronger than ever.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that all creation is according to his will except for human beings. He also says that there are three kinds of men in this world. They can be compared to three boats traveling on the sea, the first of which runs into danger and perishes, the second of which is carried by the waves, the third of which is steered well.

Chapter 88

The Son speaks: "I am the creator of all spirits good and bad. I am also their ruler and helmsman. Moreover, I am the creator of all animals and of each thing that exists and has life as well as of all each thing that exists but does not have life. Thus, whatever there is in heaven, on earth, or in the sea, each and every one of them is according to my will except for humankind alone. Know, therefore, that some men are like a boat that has lost both rudder and mast and gets tossed here and there on the swell of the sea until it runs into the cliffs of the island of death. There are on this boat those who, in despair, give their minds over to sensual pleasure.

Others are like a boat that still has its mast and rudder and an anchor with two cables. However, the main anchor is broken, and the rudder is on the verge of shattering whenever the force of the waves forces itself between the boat and the rudder. Care must therefore be taken because, while the rudder and boat are still connected, they have, as it were, mutual warmth among themselves thanks to that connection.

The third boat has all its riggings and equipment and is set to sail whenever the time comes. The first anchor, the main anchor that I mentioned earlier, is religious discipline that is lowered and lightened with the patience and fervor of divine love. This anchor has been shattered, inasmuch as what the fathers laid down has now been cast underfoot, and everyone regards whatever he finds useful as a part of the religious profession. They are thus carried about like a boat upon the waves. The second anchor, which, as I said, is still in one piece, is the intention of serving God. This is tied by two cables, namely by faith and hope, for they believe me to be God and place their hope in my will to save them. I am their rudder, and so long as I am in the boat, the swell of the waves does not enter it, and there exists a kind of warmth between them and me.

I remain connected to their boat when they love nothing as much as me. I am attached to them by the three nails of godly fear, humility, and the contemplation of my works. But if they love anything more than me, then the water of disintegration enters, then the three nails of fear, humility, and divine contemplation disintegrate, the anchor of good will is shattered, and

the cables of faith and hope are broken. The people in this boat are in a state of great insecurity and are thus headed for dangerous places.

My friends are found on the third boat because, as I said, it is set for sailing.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her about the way a spiritual knight should behave in battle, namely, to trust in God and not in one's own strength. He gives two short prayers for the knight to say daily. He also says that the knight should be armed with the spiritual weapons described here.

Chapter 89

The Son speaks: ”Whoever desires to be a fighter has to be noble in spirit and get up again if he falls, trusting not in his own power but in my mercy. A person who does not trust in my goodness has the following thoughts: 'If I make any attempts at restraining the flesh by fasting or struggling in vigil, I will not be able either to persevere or to keep myself from vices, for God does not help me' - that person deserves to fall.

Hence, a person who wants to be a spiritual fighter trusts in me and is confident that he will be able to achieve it with the aid of my grace. So he should have the intention of doing good and avoiding evil and of getting up again whenever he falls. He should say this prayer: 'Lord God Almighty, you who guide all souls toward the good, I am a sinner who has strayed far away from you through my own wrongdoing. I thank you for leading me back to the right path, and I ask you, gracious Jesus, who hung on the cross in blood and sorrow, to have mercy on me. I entreat you by your five wounds and by the pain that passed from your shattered veins to your heart. Deign to keep me safe today, lest I fall into sin. Give me the power to withstand the spears of the enemy and to get up again manfully, should I chance to fall into sin.'

In addition, in order that the fighter may be able to persevere in the good, let him pray in this way: 'O, Lord God, for whom nothing is

impossible and who can do all things, give me the strength to carry out good works and to be able to persevere in the good.'

After this, he should take his sword in hand, that is, he should make a good confession, which must be polished and gleaming. It must be polished by a careful examination of conscience regarding how and how much and where he has failed and why. It should also be gleaming in the sense that he must not be ashamed of anything nor hide anything nor describe a sin in a way other than he has committed it. This sword should have two sharp edges, namely, the intention of no longer sinning and the intention of making up for the sins he has committed. The point of the sword should be contrition. This slays the devil whenever a man who earlier delighted in sin feels contrition and sorrow for having provoked me, his God, to anger. The sword should have the hilt of the consideration of God's great mercy. His mercy is so great that no one is such a sinner that he cannot obtain forgiveness, provided he asks for it with a will to improve.

The sword of confession, then, must be held with this idea that God has mercy on all. However, in order that his hand may not be cut by the edges, a piece of iron is placed in between the edge and the hilt. A pommel prevents the sword from falling from his hand. Similarly, a person who holds the sword of confession and hopes in God's mercy for the remittance and cleansing of sin must beware not to let it fall by presuming on God's forgiveness. To prevent this there is the bolt of godly fear that makes him afraid that God will take away his grace and display anger because of his presumption. In order that his operative hand may not be cut or impaired, a piece of iron is placed between the hand and the edge. This is the consideration of God's fairness, for, though my justice is so great that I leave nothing unexamined or unpunished, yet I am also so merciful and fair that I demand nothing beyond what nature can bear. Moreover, I forgive great punishment for the sake of a good intention and great sin in return for a little reparation.

The knight's coat of mail represents abstinence. Just as a coat of mail consists of many small rings of chain, so too abstinence consists of many

virtues, for example, abstinence from immoral sights or things affecting the other senses, from gluttony and lust and superfluity, and from many other things that St. Benedict laid down as forbidden. One cannot put this coat of mail on alone without another's help. Therefore, my Mother, the Virgin Mary, should be invoked and venerated, for every good example and type of virtue are to be found in her. If she is steadfastly invoked, she will indicate to your spirit all the perfect types of abstinence.

The helmet stands for perfect hope. It has two openings, as it were, through which the knight can see. The first opening is the consideration of what things must be done, and the second that of what things must be avoided. Everyone who hopes in God should always consider what must be done or avoided in accordance with God's will. The shield stands for patience with the help of which one can cheerfully endure anything that happens.”

Christ speaks and says that his friends are like his own arm, for, like a good doctor, he cuts away any decayed flesh or noxious elements from them and adds healthy flesh to them by transforming them into himself.

Chapter 90

The Son speaks: ”My friends are like my arm. An arm has these five things: skin, flesh, blood, bones, and marrow. I am like a wise doctor who first cuts away all the useless matter, then joins flesh to flesh and bone to bone and afterward applies healing medicine.

This is how I have treated my friends. First, I removed from them all worldly passions and illicit carnal desires. Then I joined my marrow to their marrow. What is my marrow if not the power of my divinity? As a man without marrow is dead, so too that person dies who has no communion with my divinity. I have joined my divinity to their infirmity when they taste my wisdom and it bears fruit in them, when their soul understands what to do and what to avoid.

The bones stand for my strength. I have joined it to their strength when I make them strong in order to do good. The blood signifies my will. I have joined it to their will when their will accords with what I will, and when they neither seek nor desire anything but me alone. Flesh signifies my long-suffering patience. I have joined it to their patience when they are as patient as I was when I had not a sound spot from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head. The skin signifies love. I have joined it to myself when they love nothing as much as me, and when they wish to die for my sake freely and with my help.”

Christ admonishes the bride to humble herself in four ways, namely, before those who wield power in the world and before sinners as well as before the spiritual friends of God and before those who are poor in the world.

Chapter 91

The Son speaks to the bride: ”You should humble yourself in four ways; first of all, before those who wield power in the world. One should defer to authority both because it is right for men to obey other men, inasmuch as humankind scorned to obey God, and because people cannot get on without someone to direct them.

Second, humble yourself before those who live in spiritual poverty, that is, before sinners, by praying for them and giving thanks to God because, fortunately, you neither have been nor are one of them. Third, humble yourself before those who live in spiritual wealth, that is, before the friends of God, by regarding yourself as unworthy to serve them or to be in their company. Fourth, humble yourself before those who are poor in the world, by helping and clothing them and by washing their feet.”

Christ admonishes the bride to make progress and to persevere in the virtues by imitating the life of the saints and in this way to become his arm. He shows how the saints become transformed into the arm of Christ.

Chapter 92

The Son speaks: "I told you earlier that my friends are my arm. This is true, for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and my Mother, with all the heavenly host, are in them. My divine nature is like the marrow without which no one can live. The bones are my human nature, which was strong in suffering. The Holy Spirit is like the blood, for he fills and gladdens the universe. My Mother is like the flesh in which were found my divine and human natures and the Holy Spirit. The skin is the whole heavenly host.

Just as the skin covers the flesh, so did my Mother excel all the saints in virtue. Though the angels are pure, she is purer still. Though the prophets were filled with God's Spirit, though the martyrs suffered greatly, yet my Spirit was fuller and more fervent in my Mother, and she was greater than any martyr. The confessors certainly practiced complete abstinence, but my Mother had still more perfect abstinence, for in her was found my divinity along with my humanity.

Thus, when my friends have me, there is found in them my divine nature that vivifies the soul. My human nature is found in them and makes them strong unto death. The blood of my Spirit is found in them and renders their will quick to perform every good action. Their flesh is filled with my own flesh and blood when they refuse to sin and keep themselves chaste with the help of my grace. My skin is joined to their skin when they imitate the life and conduct of my saints.

In this way, my saints are aptly called my arm. You should become one of their members through the intention of progressing in virtue and by imitating them as far as you are able. Just as I unite them to myself through the union of my body, so too you should be united to them and to me through my same body."

Christ speaks to the bride and gives her three precepts, namely, to desire nothing but food and clothing, not to long to have spiritual benefits except according to God's will, and not to be sad about anything but her sins and those of others. He also tells her that those who refuse to convert and purge their sins through austere penance in this life will be severely punished at the divine judgment.

Chapter 93

The Son speaks: "I give you three precepts: first, to desire nothing beyond food and clothing; second, not to long for spiritual things except according to my will; third, not to be sad about anything but your own sins and those of others. If you do feel sorrow, consider then my strict judgment, which you can fear and ponder from the case of a certain man who has already received his sentence. He entered the monastery with three intentions in mind. He did not want to have to work, and he did not want to have to worry about food. In the third place, he thought to himself as follows: 'If a temptation of the flesh should seize me, I shall be able to evade it by some means without intercourse.' On account of all this, he was afflicted in three ways. Since he did not want to work, he was forced to work by threats and blows. In return for his second intention, he suffered nakedness and lack of food. Third, he was despised by everyone to such an extent that he was unable to experience any pleasure in his sensuality.

When the time for his profession came, he thought to himself as follows: 'Since I cannot live in the world without working, it is better for me to live in the monastery and work for God.' Because of his cooperative will, my mercy and justice came to him in order to cleanse him and bring him to my eternal glory. Once he had made his profession, he was struck down with a grave illness and suffered so much that his eyes went out due to the pain, his ears could hear nothing, and he was destitute in his every limb, all because he had not wanted to work. He suffered greater nakedness than he had in his worldly state. When he had delicious food, he could not eat it. When his natural appetites pined for it, he did not have it. He was so physically wasted before he died that he was like a cumbersome log.

When he died, he came like a thief to his trial, because he had wanted to live in the religious state according to his own preferences and not for the improvement of his life. Yet it was not fitting for him to be sentenced like a thief, since, though he was childish and foolish in his reason and conscience, still he had faith and hope in me, his God, and therefore he was sentenced in accord with mercy. Because his sin could not be fully purged by means of his physical punishment, his soul is now being so severely punished in purgatory that it is as though his skin had been peeled off and his bones placed in an oil-press so as better to squeeze the marrow out of them.

How those people will suffer who have spent their entire lives in sin and who never did or willed anything to the contrary! Woe to them, for they say to me: 'Why did God die or what use was there in his death?' This is how they repay me for redeeming them and saving them and giving them health and all that they need. I shall therefore seek judgment from them because they have broken the faith that they pledged to me in baptism, and because they do wrong every day and scorn my commandments. I shall not let their least little dereliction of religious duty go unpunished."

EXPLANATION

This brother had a secret sin and never wished to confess it. On the command of Christ, Lady Bridget went to him and said: "Do more diligent penance, for there is something hidden in your heart, and as long as you keep it shut up, you will not be able to die." He answered her that there was nothing that he had not made known in confession. But she said: "Examine your intention upon entering the monastery and with what intention you have lived up to now, and you shall find the truth in your heart."

Then he broke into tears and said: "Blessed be God who has sent you to me! Now that you have spoken of my secret, I am willing to tell the truth to those listening. I do have something hidden in my heart that I never dared nor could bring out. As often as I have repented in confession

of my other sins, my tongue was always tied about this one. An exceedingly great shame took hold of me, and I could not confess the secret remorse of my heart. Each time I made confession of my heart, I invented for myself a new conclusion to my wording. I used to say: 'Father, I confess my guilt to you concerning all the sins I have mentioned and even any others that I have not mentioned.' I thought that in this way all my hidden sins would be pardoned. But now, my Lady, if it please God, I will gladly tell the whole world about all I have concealed in my heart for so long a time."

A confessor was called, and he made a complete and tearful declaration of his sins. He died that very night.

Christ teaches the bride beautiful prayers to say when getting dressed and when going to table and when going to bed. He admonishes her to be humble in the way she dresses, and virtuous and self-controlled in the use of her body.

Chapter 94

The Son of God speaks to the bride and says: "Exterior beauty symbolizes the interior beauty a person ought to have. So when you are putting on your veil to tie up your hair, you should say: 'Lord God, I give you thanks because you supported me when I sinned. Because of my incontinent life, I am unworthy to behold you, and so I cover my hair with a veil.' " The Lord added: "Incontinence is so abhorrent to me that even a virgin who has the intention of indulging in lustful pleasure is not a pure virgin in my sight, unless she rectifies her intention through penance.

When you cover your forehead with the veil, you should say: 'Lord God, you have made all creatures well and created man in your image excelling all others, have mercy on me! Because I have not used the beauty of my face unto your glory, I cover my forehead with a veil.' When you put on your shoes, say: 'Blessed are you, my God, who commands me to wear shoes so that I may be strong and not lukewarm in your service. Strengthen me, then, so that I may be able to walk in the way of your commandments.'

You should show humility in all the other clothes you wear and be virtuous and self-controlled in the use of your whole body.

When you come to table, say: 'Lord God, if you would, for you are able to do so, I should ask you to allow us to subsist without food. Now, however, because you have commanded us to take food in a reasonable way, I ask you, grant me temperance at meals so that, by your grace, I may be able to eat as my nature needs and not as my bodily appetite craves.'

When you go to bed, say: 'Blessed are you, my God, who arranges the changes of time for our relaxation and for the comfort of soul and body! I ask you to give my body rest this night and to keep me safe from the power and deception of the enemy.' ”

Christ tells the bride what kind of weapons belong to the wicked. He explains to her that if they boast of their sin with the intention of persevering in it, they shall be laid waste by the terrible sword of God's severe justice.

Chapter 95

The Son speaks: ”I stand here like a king challenged to battle. The devil stands against me with his army. In truth, my intention and steadfast purpose is such that heaven and earth and all that are in them could collapse before I deviated in even the slightest way from justice. The devil's intention is such that he would rather there be as many hells as atoms in the sun before humbling himself. Some of the enemy are already drawing close to judgment, and there is no more of a distance between us than a couple of feet. Their banner is raised, the shield is on the arm, the hand rests on the sword but the sword has not yet been drawn. My patience is so great that I shall not strike them unless they strike first.

The enemy's banner shows three things: gluttony, greed, and lust. Their helmet is their hardness of heart, for they pay no attention to the pains of hell nor to how abhorrent sin is to me. The openings of the helmet

are carnal lust and the desire to please the world. Through such they run all about and see things that should not be seen. Their shield is the perfidy with which they excuse their sins and ascribe them to the weakness of the flesh. Thus, they think they can ask pardon for their sins for nothing. Their sword is the intention of persevering in sin. It is not yet drawn, because their wickedness is as yet unfulfilled.

The sword is drawn each time they desire to sin as long as they can live. They strike each time they boast of sin and wish to remain in the state of sin. When their wickedness is thus fulfilled, then a voice in my army shall cry out and say: 'Strike now!' Then the sword of my severity shall lay them to waste, and each one shall suffer according as he is armed. Their souls shall be snatched away by demons who are like birds of prey and are not seeking any temporal advantage but only souls whom they can endlessly mangle to pieces."

The Bridegroom explains to the bride the meaning of the distance of two feet and the drawing of the sword spoken of in the above chapter.

Chapter 96

The Son speaks: "I told you earlier that there is no more distance between me and my enemies than a couple of feet. Indeed they are now advancing a foot closer to the judgment. One of these feet symbolizes the reward for the good works they have done for me. Accordingly, from now on their ignominy will grow, their pleasure will turn bitter, their joy will be taken away, their trouble and sorrow will increase. The second foot is their wickedness, which is as yet unfulfilled. Just as people say that a thing is so filled it will burst, so too when their soul and body are separated, they will be condemned by the judge.

Their sword is their intention of sinning. It has been drawn out halfway because, when a man is on the wane and misfortunes occur, the wicked suffer more anguish but still remain eager to sin. Fame and fortune

do not allow them to ponder over sin much. As it is, they wish to live longer so as to achieve their lustful pleasure, and they are already adding to their sinning with even greater license. Woe to them, for, unless they rectify themselves, their perdition is already at hand!”

Christ speaks to the bride about a certain prelate. He tells her that a devout soul that loses the heat of devotion and of holy meditation due to her own pride and ambition and worldly entanglements can recuperate divine warmth and light and experience divine sweetness by humbling herself perfectly before God.

Chapter 97

The Son speaks through the bride to a certain prelate and tells him: ”You are like an immobile mill wheel. When it stands fixed and does not move, then the grain does not get ground in the mill. This wheel signifies your will. It should be mobile not with respect to your own will and desire but to mine, and you ought to surrender yourself completely into my hands. However, this wheel is very immobile toward my will, since the water of earthly consideration is troubling your mind too much. The contemplation of my works and my passion is almost dead in your heart, for which reason you have no feeling or taste for the food of the soul.

So break through the obstacle that obstructs the passage of the water! Let the water flow so that it makes the wheel turn and become mobile again so that the grain can be easily ground. The obstacle holding back the water is mental pride and ambition. These obstruct the grace of the Holy Spirit and impede all the good fruit that the soul should be producing. Receive into your mind the true humility through which the sweetness of my Spirit will flow into your soul and earthly considerations will be washed away. Humility will make your will perfectly mobile with respect to my will, and then you will begin to regard your works as seeds of grain and count my works as great.

What is true humility? Certainly not caring about human popularity or disfavor. Rather, it is to tread my forgotten and neglected path, not seeking

after superfluous possessions but contenting yourself with simpler things. If you love this path, then you will obtain a liking for the spiritual life. Then my passion and the path of my saints will seem sweet to your mind, and you will understand how much you owe to the souls whom you have undertaken to guide.

Now that you have ascended to the top of the wheel on the two feet of power and distinction, you have become covetous because of your power and proud because of your distinction. So come down now by humbling yourself in your mind and by asking the humble to pray for you. I shall surely send upon you the rapid stream of my justice and exact the last farthing from you along with an account of your affections, thoughts, words, and deeds. I shall also exact an account of the souls whom I have entrusted to your care, those whom I myself redeemed with my blood.”

Christ speaks to the bride and says that sinners and the lukewarm will be shot by four arrows, that is, by the four rebukes contained herein, to make them repent and let themselves be humbly led back to the reformation of their lives.

Chapter 98

The Son speaks: ”I shall give my friends four arrows. By the first shall be shot the man who is blind in one eye; by the second the man who is lame in one foot; by the third the man who is deaf in one ear; by the fourth the man who lies stretched out on the ground.

The man blind in one eye symbolizes the people who see the commandments of God and the deeds of the saints but pay them no attention. They do see, however, the pleasures of the world and covet them. Such people should be shot by saying thus: 'You are like Lucifer who beheld the utmost beauty of God but who, because he unjustly desired what he should not have desired, descended into hell. You, too, shall descend there, unless you come to your senses, inasmuch as you understand the precepts of God as well as the transient nature of

everything in the world. The best advice for you, then, is to hold on to what is certain and let go of what is transient, so that you do not descend into hell.'

The man lame in one foot symbolizes those who repent and are sorry for the sins they have committed, but who strive to acquire earthly comforts and worldly rewards. Such people should be shot in this way: 'You strive for the comfort of a body that worms will shortly be consuming. Strive instead for the profit of your soul that will live forever.'

The man deaf in one ear symbolizes those who desire to hear my words and those of my saints but also keep their other ear open for coarse and worldly speech. Tell them thus: 'You are like Judas who listened to God's words with one ear but they went out the other. What he heard did not do him any good. Close your ears to empty words so that you may come to hear the angels' song.'

The man stretched out on the ground symbolizes those who are entangled in earthly matters yet think on and wish to know the way by which they can reform themselves. Tell them thus: 'The time is short. It is but a moment. Yet the punishment of hell is eternal and the glory of the saints everlasting. In order, then, to attain true life, do not worry about taking up a heavy and difficult load, for God is as just as he is kind.'

If the arrow comes out bloodied from the heart of anyone shot in this way, that is, if he feels compunction and resolves to reform his life, then I will pour into him the oil of my grace by which his whole body will regain its strength."

Christ speaks to the bride and laments over his Jewish crucifiers. He also laments over the Christians who scorn him along with his charity and justice by presumptuously and knowingly sinning against his commandments and by spurning the church's sentences of excommunication under the pretext of God's mercy. For this he threatens them with the fury and wrath of his justice.

Chapter 99

The Mother says: "At the time of my Son's suffering, when his betrayer Judas approached, he bent down - for Judas was small of size - and gave him a kiss and said: 'Friend, for what have you come?' And some of those there seized him immediately, while others pulled him by the hair or defiled him with their spittle."

Then the Son spoke, saying: "I am regarded as a worm, lying as though dead in the winter. Passersby spit on it and trample it down. This day the Jews treated me like a worm, for they held me to be the lowest and most unworthy of creatures. Even so do Christians scorn me, for they regard as meaningless everything I have done and endured for them out of love. They trample me down each time they fear and venerate man more than me, their God, each time they count my judgment for naught and fix the time and measure for my mercy according to their own conceptions.

They strike me in the teeth whenever, having heard of my commandments and suffering, they say: 'Let us do whatever delights us in the present, and we shall obtain heaven nonetheless. If God had wanted us to perish or to punish us eternally, he would not have created us or redeemed us at such a bitter cost.' That is why they shall experience my justice. While not the least little good will go unrewarded, neither will the least little evil remain unpunished. They treat me with scorn, as though crushing me underfoot, whenever they disregard the church's sentence of excommunication. As the excommunicated are shunned by others, so too such as these will be separated from me, inasmuch as excommunication, when it is known but scorned, causes more grievous injury than a physical sword.

Since, then, I appear as a worm to them, I will now come to life again through my terrible judgment. My coming will be so terrible that those who see it will say to the mountains: 'Fall upon us, cover us from the wrathful face of God!' "

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she is like a pipe of the Holy Spirit through which he makes lovely music in the world for his own glory and for the benefit of people. For this reason, he wants to coat her with the silver of virtuous conduct and wisdom on the outside and with the gold of humility and purity of heart on the inside.

Chapter 100

The Son says to the bride: "You should be like a pipe on which the piper makes lovely music. The owner of the pipe coats it with silver on the outside so that it will look more costly, but with durable gold on the inside. You, too, should be coated with the silver of virtuous conduct and human wisdom in order to understand what you owe to God and to your neighbor as well as what is expedient for the eternal salvation of body and soul. You should be coated on the inside with the gold of humility so that you long to please no one but me and are not afraid of being displeasing to other people for my sake.

The piper does three more things for his pipe. First he wraps it in silk so that it does not get dirty. Second, he makes a case to keep it in. Third, he makes a lock for the case so that it will not be stolen by a thief. You, too, should be wrapped in purity so that you no longer wish to be stained by lust or desire.

Instead, struggle cheerfully to remain by yourself, because dealings with evil men corrupt virtuous conduct. The lock represents the diligent custody of all your senses and inner faculties so that you guard against the devil's deception in all your actions. The key, however, is the Holy Spirit. He opens your heart, exactly as I please, for my glory and the benefit of men."

The Mother of God says that her Son's heart is most sweet, most clean, and most pleasant, so abounding in love that even if a sinner were standing at the very door of perdition and cried out to him with a purpose of amendment, he would be

immediately freed. One reaches the heart of God through the humility of true contrition and through the devout and frequent contemplation of his passion.

Chapter 101

The Mother of God speaks: "My Son's heart is as sweet as the sweetest honey and as clean as the purest spring, for whatever belongs to virtue and goodness flows from it as from a spring. His heart is also most pleasant. What is more pleasant to a sensible person than the contemplation of God's love in his creation and redemption, in his life of work and his teaching, in his grace and long-suffering? His love is indeed not fluid like water, but widespread and durable, for it stays with a person until the very end, so much so that if a sinner were standing at the very gates of perdition, even then he would be rescued if he cried out with a purpose of amendment.

There are two ways to reach the heart of God. The first is the humility of true contrition. This leads a person to God's heart and to a spiritual dialogue. The second way is the contemplation of my Son's passion. This removes the hardness of the human heart and makes a person run toward God's heart with joy."

The bride is shown the judgment of the soul of a monk before Christ the judge. The Blessed Virgin intercedes for him and the devil accuses him savagely of grave sins.

Chapter 102

The Mother of God speaks to the Son, saying: "My plea is great. Though you know all things, I am presenting it for the sake of her who is present here." The Son answers: "All judgment is given to me, and it is necessary to me to render particular judgments. Nine good characteristics belong to a righteous judge. First, to listen attentively; second, to distinguish the charges; third, the intention to render a just judgment; fourth, to inquire into the causes of the litigation; fifth, to inquire into how

long the quarrel has lasted, for greater damage accrues with the delay of justice; sixth, to inquire into the qualities of the witnesses, if they are trustworthy, if they agree in their assertions, if one of the litigants has more witnesses than the other; seventh, not to be either rash or timid in judging nor to fear power or injury or loss of honor on behalf of the truth; eighth, to show no interest in anyone's entreaties or bribes; ninth, to be fair in judgment, judging a poor man the same as a rich, a brother or son the same as a stranger, not acting contrary to the truth on account of any worldly benefit. Accordingly, dear Mother, say what you will!"

His Mother answered: "Two contend with each other, and two spirits are in them, a good spirit in one, an evil spirit in the other. They are contending over your blood's acquisition, one in order to kill, the other in order to give life. Obedience and love are found in the one, hate and pride in the other. Accordingly, render your verdict!" The Son answered: "How many witnesses are with your friend and how many with the other?" The Mother answered: "My friend has few witnesses, while the other has many witnesses who know the truth, yet scorn to listen." The Son answered: "I shall render a just verdict." The Mother said: "My friend makes no plea. However, I, his Lady, do make a plea, in order that evil may not prevail." The Son answered: "I shall do as you want. As you know, however, the physical verdict must precede the spiritual one, and no one should be convicted, unless the sin has been carried out."

The Mother: "My Son, though we know everything, I am asking on behalf of her who is present, what is the physical verdict and what is the spiritual verdict in this case?" The Son: "The physical verdict is that his soul must quickly depart from his body, and his hand will be his death. The spiritual verdict is that his soul must hang on the gallows of hell, which is not made of ropes but of the hottest flames, for he is an unworthy sheep that has fallen far away from his flock."

Then one of the Augustinian monks addressed the judge and said: "Lord, this man has nothing to do with you. You called him to a life of retirement, and he forgot it. His vow of obedience has been broken. His name has been removed. His deeds are none." The judge answered: "His

soul is not present in the courtroom to be able to respond.” The devil said to him: ”I will make a response. You called him indeed away from the storms of the world to a life of retirement, but I called from the highest peak to the deepest hole. He obeyed me promptly. His name is glorious to me.”

The Judge: ”Explain your knowledge of him.” The devil said: ”So I shall, though unwillingly. You called him from the stormy cares of the world to the quiet haven of the spiritual life, but he thought nothing of this, for he strove even more eagerly after worldly concerns. The highest peak is honest contrition and confession. A person possessing it converses with you, the almighty, and touches your majesty. I threw him headlong from that highest peak at the moment when he resolved to keep sinning until the end, at the moment when he thought nothing of sinning, but found your justice meaningless.

The deepest hole is gluttony and greed, for, like a very deep hole, it cannot be filled. His greed was that insatiable! He bore the name of monk, and the name of monk implies self-restraint and abstinence even from licit wants. Yet this name was erased in him, and now he is called Saul. As Saul departed from the way of obedience, so has he as well. His vow of obedience has been broken. As two ends of a broken piece of timber cannot be fitted together when the wood has rotted, neither this man's desire for heaven nor his love of God, which are like the two ends or points of union of obedience, could fit together in his obedience, for he only obeyed for the sake of worldly advantage and his own self-will. His deeds were also like my own deeds. Though I do not say mass or chant or do the other things he does, still when he does all of that in accord with my will, then he is doing my deeds, and his deeds can be said to be mine. When he celebrates masses, he approaches you with presumption, and that presumption fills him all the more with my wickedness. He chants for the sake of human praise. When I turn my back on him, he turns his back on me. Whenever I wish, he turns his belly toward my belly, that is, he carries out his sensual desires just as I wish. Everything he does, he does because of the present life and because of his own self-will. Hence, his deeds are my deeds.”

EXPLANATION

The same soul then appeared blind and trembling. An Ethiopian followed him in until he reached the judge who seemed to be seated on a great throne with a multitude standing by. The Ethiopian said: "O Judge, give me your verdict on this soul. Now his soul is present in person and his physical verdict has already preceded." The Ethiopian said: "You said that his hand was to be his death. This has already been accomplished." The Judge: "That can be understood in two ways. Either a wicked action became the occasion of his death or his physical hand cut short the life of his body." The Ethiopian answered: "True indeed. His shameful way of life killed his soul, and impatience opened the wound in his body by which he died." The Judge told him: "Your earlier accusation of this soul alleged that he followed your wishes in every way, that you had tried to throw him down from the highest height, and that he turned his belly toward you. Let us hear, then, what the soul herself has to say!"

Then the Judge turned to the soul and said: "Soul, you had the rational faculty of discerning between good and evil. Why did you trample your priestly honor underfoot?" The soul answered: "I did have the rational faculty, but I preferred to follow my own will by not believing that something so great could lie hidden beneath such modest appearances." The Judge then said: "You knew that the monastic way of perfection meant humility and obedience. Why did you enter it as a wolf in the likeness of a sheep?" The soul said: "So that I could flee the world's reproach and lead a quieter life." The Judge replied a third time: "Brother - but no brother of mine - if you saw the example of your holy brothers and heard the words of the saints, why did you not follow them?" The soul answered: "All those good things that I heard and saw were loathsome and onerous to me, for I had decided in my heart rather to follow my own will and my own ways than the ways of the saints."

The Judge spoke for the fourth time: "Did you not frequently fast and pray and go to confession?" The soul: "I did frequently fast and pray, but I did it in the manner of a man who admits some lesser things in order to

please but hides greater ones in order not to displease.” The Judge: ”Had you not read that each man must render an account even of a farthing, that is, even of the least little things?” Then, as though wailing loudly, the soul said: ”Indeed, Lord, I had read it and I knew it in my conscience, but I thought that your mercy was so great that you would not punish someone for eternity. Accordingly, I did have the desire to repent in old age, but pain and death came upon me so suddenly that, when I wanted to go to confession, I had lost my memory, and my tongue was tied as if with a chain.”

Then the devil cried out: ”Judge, this is incredible! I see that this soul is condemning herself. So let her confess her wickedness now to no avail. Yet I dare not lay my hand upon her without your sentence.” The Judge answered: ”It is over and done.” At that the Ethiopian and the soul disappeared, as though they were tied together. They went down with a great clap of thunder.

Then the Judge said: ”All this took place in an instant, but, for the sake of your understanding, it appeared to take place in time so that you may see and know and fear God's justice.”

While at prayer, the bride of Christ saw in a vision how Blessed Denis prayed to the Virgin Mary for the kingdom of France.

Chapter 103

While I was at prayer, I saw how Blessed Denis addressed the Virgin Mary, saying: ”You are the Queen of Mercy. All mercy is given to you. You became Mother of God for the sake of our salvation, we who are wretched sinners. Therefore, have mercy on the kingdom of France, your France and mine. It is yours, because its inhabitants honor you in their measure. It is mine, because I am their patron saint and they trust in me. You see how many souls are in danger in every hour, how men's bodies are being struck down like beasts and, what is worse, how many souls are falling like snowflakes down to hell. Comfort them, then, and pray for

them, for you are the Lady and Helper of all” The Mother of God answered: ”Appear before my Son, and let us hear - for the sake of this woman - what he will say in answer.”

Together with Blessed Denis and other saints, the Mother of God entreats her Son on behalf of France and because of the war between the two kings, who are compared to two ferocious beasts.

Chapter 104

The Mother speaks to her Son, saying: ”Blessed are you, my Son. It is written that I was called blessed because I bore you in my womb. You responded that a person is blessed who hears your words and keeps them. Son, I am she who kept your words in my heart and memory. Therefore, I recall to you the word you spoke in answer to Peter's question about forgiving a sinner up to seven times. You said that a sinner is to be forgiven up to seventy times seven times, meaning by this that you are ready to show mercy as often as a person humbles himself with a desire to improve.” The Son answered: ”I bear you witness that my words were as deeply rooted in you as the seed planted in fertile earth that gives fruit a hundredfold. Even so, do your virtuous deeds bear joyful fruit. So ask what you will!”

His Mother answered: ”Together with Denis and the other saints of yours whose bodies lie in the earth of the kingdom of France, though their souls are in heaven, I ask you: Have mercy on this kingdom! I speak figuratively for the sake of this woman who is present in spirit. I see, as it were, two most ferocious beasts, each of its own kind. The one beast is excessively greedy and will gobble up whatever it can get. The more it eats, the hungrier it gets, and its craving is never sated. The other beast strives to rise up above all the others. These beasts have three ugly traits. First, a horrible roar; second, they are full of perilous fire; third, each of them desires to gobble up the other's heart. One of them, with its teeth on the other's back, is trying to find an entrance to its heart by biting it to

death. The other has its mouth against the other's breast and wants to get at its heart from there. The horrible roar of these beasts can be heard far away, and all the other beasts that come with mouths wide open will start burning with the fire from these two beasts and fall to their deaths. The beasts that come with their mouths shut will be stripped of their hides and go away naked.

These two beasts stand for the kingdoms of France and England. The one king is never sated, for he wages war out of greed. The other king is striving to rise above others. Hence, both are full of the fire of anger and greed. The roar of the beasts says this: 'Accept gold and worldly riches, and do not spare the blood of Christians!' Each beast desires the death of the other, and each is therefore seeking some place where it can injure the other. One of them is trying to injure it on the back, for he wants his unjust claim to be called just and the just claim of the other to be declared unjust. The second one is trying to injure the other's heart at its breast, because he knows he has a just cause and is therefore inflicting a lot of damage without caring about others' loss and misery and without showing any divine charity in his justice. He seeks an entrance through the breast, inasmuch as he has a more just claim to the kingdom, but he has pride and anger along with the justice of his claim. The other has a less just claim and is therefore burning with greed.

The other beasts that come with mouths wide open are those that come to them due to their own greed. Men who are kings in name but are really traitors fill their open mouths. They cast abundant money and gifts into their mouths and make them burn for warfare so that they fall to their deaths. Their property remains behind, but their bodies are received into the earth, and the devil's maggots chew away at their souls. Thus, these two kings are betraying many of the souls redeemed by my Son with his blood. The beasts that are stripped of their hides are those simple folk who are content with their possessions. They go to war in the intention and belief that justice is on their side and that they are waging a just war. They are stripped of their hides, that is, their bodies, through death, but their souls are received into heaven. Therefore, my Son, have mercy!"

The Son answered: "Since you see all things in me, explain while this woman present is listening what just reason there is for these kings to be heard." The Mother answered: "I hear three voices. The first is that of these kings. One of them is thinking to himself thus: 'If I can get what is my own, I would not care about having what belongs to others, yet I am afraid of losing it all.' Because of this fear, namely, his fear of the world's reproach, he turns to me in prayer and says: 'Mary, pray for me!' The other king is thinking thus: 'Would that I were as I was before! I am weary.' So he, too, turns to me. The second voice is that of the common folk who pray to me every day for peace. The third voice is that of your elect who cry out and say: 'We do not weep over the bodies of the dead, nor the losses, nor the poverty, but over the fall of souls who are in constant danger. Therefore, our Lady, entreat your Son so that the souls may be saved!' For these reasons, my Son, have mercy on them!"

The Son answered: "It is written that to him who knocks it shall be opened, and to him who calls it shall be answered, and to him who asks it shall be given. However, just as everyone who knocks is outside the door, so too these kings are outside the door, since they do not have me within them. All the same, for your sake, it will be opened to them who pray."

Christ speaks to the bride about how peace should be established between the kings of France and England. If the kings do not heed it, they shall be punished severely.

Chapter 105

The Son speaks: "I am the king to fear and to glorify. I shall send my words to them for the sake of my Mother's prayers. I am true peace. Wherever there is peace, there am I assuredly. If these two kings of France and England wish to have peace, I shall give lasting peace to them. However, true peace cannot be had without loving truth and justice. Hence, given that one of the kings does have a just claim, I would have peace brought about by means of a marriage. In this way the kingdom can attain a legitimate successor. Second, I want them to be of one heart and one

mind in spreading the holy Christian faith wherever this can be done to my glory. Third, they must remove their intolerable taxes and fraudulent schemes and love the souls of their subjects.

If the presently reigning king refuses to obey, let him know that he most assuredly will not prosper in his endeavors but will end his life in sorrow and lose his kingdom in the midst of heavy trials. His son and family will be left in such anger, reproach and shame as to astonish everyone. If the king with the just claim is willing to obey, then I shall help him and fight on his side. If he will not obey, then neither will he achieve his desires but will be deprived of his attainments, and his sorry end will overshadow his happy beginning. However, when the people of the French realm adopt true humility, then the kingdom will attain a legitimate successor and a noble peace.”

Christ tells the bride not to be afraid to break her fast out of obedience to her spiritual father, because it is not a sin. He also admonishes her to stand firm, to resist temptations continuously, and to have the firm intention of persevering in the good example set by the Virgin Mary, David, and Abraham.

Chapter 106

The Son speaks: ”Why are you afraid? Even if you ate four times a day, it would not be counted as a sin for you, provided you did it with the permission of the person whom you are bound to obey. So stand firm. You should be like a soldier who, though injured with various wounds in battle, inflicts worse wounds on his enemies and is all the more eager to fight the more he is chased by his enemies. You, too, should strike back at your enemy and stand firm. You should also have the rational intention of persevering in the good.

You strike back at the devil each time you do not give in to temptation and resist it manfully, for example, by opposing humility to pride, restraint to gluttony. You stand firm when you do not murmur against God in the midst of temptation but, rather, when you are grateful to God, cheerfully

putting up with everything and blaming it all on your sins. Your intention is rational when you do not desire a reward unless it is in agreement with my will, when you surrender your whole self into my hands.

Lucifer did not have the first virtue, that of striking back at the enemy, because he immediately gave in to his own thoughts. This is why he fell irrepressibly. As he had no instigator of his wickedness, so too he shall have no redresser. Judas did not have the second virtue, that of firmness. Instead, he despaired and hanged himself. Pilate did not have the third virtue, that of a good intention, since he was more eager to please the Jews and win his own honor than to set me free.

However, my Mother did have the first virtue, that of striking back at the enemy, since for every temptation she had, she hit back and opposed to it the contrary virtue. David had the second virtue, for he was patient in adversity and did not despair when he fell. Abraham had the third virtue, a perfect intention, for, having left his fatherland, he was even ready to sacrifice his only son. You, too, should imitate these three as far as you are able!”

Christ encourages the bride, that is, the soul, always and lovingly to maintain pure contrition, godly love, and unwavering obedience. He condemns those who despise obedience, abstinence, and noble patience. He also warns a spiritual man not to allow his conscience to become gradually coarse and blind under a pretense of light.

Chapter 107

An angel of wondrous splendor appeared. Other angels were seen speaking with him and saying: ”Friend, why are you offering an empty nutshell to our God?” The angel answered: ”Though you already know everything, I will explain it for the sake of the woman who is here present. I never grow sad in the presence of our God when I am carrying out his will for the good of souls, for I am never away from his presence. Even if I am not offering him a sweet-tasting nut, I am offering something

delectable, a key made of purest gold, a golden vase, and a crown of jewels.

The key symbolizes pure contrition for sins. This opens God's heart and lets a sinner enter. The vase symbolizes godly delight and love. God takes his sweet rest there with the soul. The crown symbolizes cheerful, unwavering obedience. These are the three things that my God seeks for in a holy soul.

Although this particular soul entrusted to my care has scorned these three things, still I am giving to God the things this soul has offered to him, and God's glory will be no less. The key of contrition is so onerous to this man that he does not even want to think about it. The vase of godly love is so bitter to him that he can in no way bear its smell. How can spiritual delight be sweet where the lust of the flesh has taken root? Two contraries do not combine well in the same vase. Even the crown of obedience is too heavy for him to bear, since his self-will is so pleasing to him that it seems to him more pleasant to follow his own will than God's will.

The angel then turned to God and said: "Behold, Lord, the vase and key and crown of which this soul made herself unworthy. Look, when you crack the shell, it is full of dirt inside, when it should be full of the sweetest honey. Instead, a snake is lying there in the midst of the shell. The shell symbolizes the heart. When death cracks it, it is full of longings for the world, and these are like dirt. The snake is the soul. The soul should be brighter than sunlight, hotter than flame, but she has turned into a serpent full of venom, poisonous to no one but herself, unto her own perdition."

The Lord spoke then to the bride and said: "I will tell you what condition that man is in by means of a comparison. It is as though one man were standing and another came up and approached him. When they turn their faces toward each other, the man who was walking says: 'Sir, it seems there is a distance separating us. Show me the way by which I should go, for I see that you are mighty without comparison, delightful beyond conception, and as good as one from whom all goodness comes and without whom no one is good.' The other answered: 'Friend, I shall show

you a triple path that, nevertheless, leads in one direction. When you follow it, it is rocky at the beginning but smooth at the end, dark at the head of the journey but bright as you go on, harsh for a time but delightful in the end.' The other answered: 'Just show me the way and I will gladly follow it. I see that there is danger in delay and harm in mistaking the way but a great benefit if I follow it. So fulfill my desire and show me the true path.'

I am the creator of the universe, who remains unchangeable and forever steadfast. That person was approaching me when he was in love with me and sought after nothing as he sought after me. I turned my face toward him when I placed divine consolation in his soul, and the joy of the world and every lust of the flesh became hateful to him. I showed him a triple way, not by speaking to him with a physical voice but by inspiring his soul in a hidden way, as I am now inspiring your soul in an open way.

First, I showed him that he should be obedient to me, his God, and to his superiors. However, he answered me, thinking to himself in his mind: 'I won't. My superior is difficult and uncharitable, and so I just can't obey him with a cheerful mind.' I showed him also a second way, that of fleeing the lust of the flesh and following my divine will, fleeing drunkenness and following abstinence. These ways lead to true obedience. Yet he answered me: 'Never! I am weak by nature. So I shall eat and sleep enough. I shall converse for the sake of good cheer and laugh for the sake of worldly comfort.' I showed him also a third way, that of being nobly patient for my sake, for this way leads to abstinence and encourages holy obedience. But he answered me: 'I won't do it. If I put up with those insults to me, I will look foolish. If I dress more poorly than the others, I will be ashamed in front of everyone. If my body is ugly in any way, I must make up for it by catering to others.' "

"In this way," said the Lord, "his conscience and I contended together, until finally he drew away from me and turned his back instead of his face toward me. In what sense did he turn it? By wanting to obey only in the way he liked, and by wanting to be patient only provided that it did not lessen his friendship with the world in any way. Now the devil is

struggling to make him completely blind and mute. He is trying to tie his hands and bind his feet and lead him off to the darkness of hell. He makes him blind when the man thinks as follows: 'God redeemed me through his passion. He will not let me be lost, for he is merciful. God does not scrutinize sin so exactly, given that people are offending him all the time.' This proves that his faith is unstable. Have him search my gospel, then, to see what account I shall demand of words and how much greater an account of deeds. Have him also search there to find out that the rich man was not buried in hell because of theft but because of his misuse of the wealth granted to him. Again, the devil makes him mute when the man hears the example and words of my friends and then says: 'Nobody can live like that nowadays.' This proves that he has very little hope. I am, of course, the one who has given my friends the ability to live thus decently and chastely. I can also give him a like capacity, if he would only place his hope in me.

The devil ties his hands whenever the man loves something more than me, when he gets more eagerly concerned about the world than about my glory. Let him therefore be cautious in order not to get tripped up by the devil while he seems so intent on the world, for the devil lays out his snares when one is least on one's guard. The devil binds his feet when the man pays no attention to his thoughts and affections, when he does not consider the form of his temptations, when he is so intent on gratifying his neighbor and his own flesh that he pays no attention to saving his soul. Have him, therefore, ponder what I said in the gospel about how a man who puts his hand to the plow should not look back, and how he who has entered upon a more profitable way of life should not turn back.

The devil also enchains his heart, each time the man inclines his will to evil in such a way that he thinks about worldly honors and longs both to have them and to persevere in such a disposition. The devil leads him toward darkness each time the man has such thoughts as these: 'Whether I attain to glory or to punishment is of little concern to me.'

Woe to him who falls into such a darkness!

However, I would run to meet him as a father if he would but turn toward me. In what sense? By having the intention of doing as much as he can. As it is not licit for the son of a man to take a woman to wife against her will, so it is not licit for the Son of the Virgin. The human will is like a tool by which divine love is introduced into the soul. Just as a miller who wants to split stones first looks for cracks into which he first inserts his finer tools and then heavier ones until the stone is broken, so too I first look for goodwill and then pour my grace into it, and then, as the person's activity increases and his will makes progress, a larger amount of my grace is also added, until the stone-like heart is converted and grows into a heart of flesh, and the heart of flesh becomes a spiritual heart."

EXPLANATION

This was a prior in the region of Sicily close to the volcanic mountain. The following revelation also concerned him.

ADDITION

The Son of God speaks: "This brother is wondering why my apostles, Peter and Paul, lay neglected for so long a time in the catacombs. I answer you: The Golden scripture says that Israel was in the desert for a long time because the wickedness of the Gentiles whose lands they were to possess had not yet been completed. This was also the case with my apostles. The time of grace had not yet come in which the bodies of my apostles were to be exalted, since first there had to be a time of trial and afterward of coronation, and also because those persons were not yet born who were to have the honor of exalting the apostles.

Now you might ask whether their bodies had any honor during the time in which they lay in the grave. My answer is that my angels took care of and gave honor to those blessed bodies. The area of the catacombs was like a place where roses and plants are to be sown and that is carefully cultivated beforehand. The catacombs, which angels and men would rejoice over, were likewise prepared and honored long beforehand. I assure you that there are many places in the world where the bodies of the saints

rest, but none are like this place. If all the saints whose bodies repose here were counted, it would scarcely be believed. Just as an enfeebled man is restored by the good smell and taste of food, so too the people who come to this place with an upright mind are spiritually revived and receive true pardon for their sins, each according to his or her faith and way of life.”

This same brother was very much moved to compunction by the words of Lady Bridget. He heard a voice on three separate nights saying to him: ”Hurry, hurry! Come, come!” On the fourth day, he fell sick and died in Rome after having received the sacraments.

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that three saints were most especially pleasing to him. These were the Virgin Mary, Blessed John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene.

Chapter 108

The Son speaks: ”There were three saints who were most especially pleasing to me. These were Mary, my Mother, John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene. My Mother, both at and before her birth, was so beautiful that there was no stain in her. The devils realized it and experienced such distress then that - figuratively speaking - it was as though their voices resounded from hell saying: 'A virgin has come forth so virtuously and miraculously that she excels everyone on earth and in heaven and reaches all the way to God's throne. Even if we attack her with all our snares, she destroys them all - they are broken like flax and fall apart like old ropes. If we come against her with all our evil and impurity, she cuts it all down, like grass cut down by a sickle. If we plant sensuality and worldly desires in her, they are extinguished like a spark by a torrent of water.'

When John the Baptist was born, it caused such displeasure in the devils that it was as though a voice resounded from hell saying: 'A miraculous child has been born. What shall we do? If we attack him with pride, he scorns to listen to us and much less wants to obey our suggestion.

If we offer him riches, he turns his back on us and refuses to look, and if we offer him sensual pleasure, he is like a dead man and cannot feel it.'

When Mary Magdalene was converted, the devils said: 'How shall we get her back? We have lost a fat prize. She bathed herself so with the water of her tears that we do not dare to look upon her. She has covered herself so with good works that no sinful stain can come near her. She is so fervent and zealous in the service of God and in holiness that we do not dare to approach her.'

These three saints regarded the soul as ruler and the body as slave. The soul in each of them had three characteristics: First, it loved nothing but me; second, it would not act against my will; third, they each refused to neglect anything having to do with me. Although they had a soul such as this, still they did not despise the body or give it poison instead of food or thorns instead of clothing, nor did they lie down to rest on anthills. No, they had moderate nourishment for my glory and for the benefit of the soul, clothes for covering the body but not for proud display, and sleep for rest and a bed for comfort.

Nevertheless, if they knew it would have pleased me, and if I had given them my grace, they would have been happy to accept the bitterest substances for food and thorns for clothes, and they would have lain down on anthills. Considering, however, that I am just and merciful in all ways, they were just toward their bodies by restraining its illicit impulses, but they were also merciful in indulging the body so that it would not collapse or be destroyed due to harsh and severe labor.

You might ask: Since the holy hermits and fathers of old receive enough grace to enable them to eat but once a week, and others, too, have enjoyed the food and ministrations of angels, why did I not grant these three such a grace? I answer: Those holy fathers were granted such fasting for three reasons. The first was in order to exhibit my grace and power so that people might know that, if I should please, I can sustain the body without food just as I sustain the soul without corporal food. The second reason was in order to set an example to teach people that bodily toil and

hardship lead the soul to heaven. The third reason was the avoidance of sin, since unrestrained sensual desires lead to punishment. In order, then, that people might learn temperance and moderation in living, I myself, God and man - though I could have lived in the world without food - made use of food and other necessities for the body, so that humankind might be thankful to me, their God, and possess moderate comfort in the world and perfect liberty with the saints in heaven.”

The Mother says that spiritual persons, once they have been converted through penance and charity and contrition and patience, ought to buy back all the time they have lost earlier so that they do not offer empty nutshells to God.

Chapter 109

The Mother speaks: ”Sometimes when nuts are offered to a lord, some of them are found to be empty, and these have to be filled so as to become acceptable to him. It is similar in spiritual works. Many people perform many good works, and their sin is diminished because of them so that they do not end up in hell. However, there may have been many empty moments before those good works and in between them, and it is necessary to fill them, if there is still time to work. Otherwise, contrition and charity supply every lack.

Thus, Mary Magdalene offered nuts - good works, that is - to God. There were some empty ones among them, because she had had a lot of time for sinning. However, she supplied all that was lacking with the help of time, patience, and effort. Likewise, John the Baptist offered filled nuts, as it were, to God, for he had served God from youth and offered him all his time. The apostles offered, so to speak, half-filled nuts to God, since a lot of their time before their conversion was spent imperfectly. I, God's Mother, offered him nuts that were filled and sweeter than honey, for I was full of grace and was maintained in grace from my youth up. I tell you, therefore, that, though people's sins may be pardoned, they should redeem

the earlier empty times of their lives through their patience and works of charity while they still have time.”

Christ instructs the bride about the difference between the good spirit and the devil's deception, and about how one must respond to each of them.

Chapter 110

The Son speaks: "How can one recognize my spirit, since there are two spirits, one good and one bad? I shall tell you: My spirit is hot and has two effects. First, he makes one desire nothing but God; second, he grants utmost humility and contempt for the world. The bad spirit is both cold and hot: cold in that he makes bitter everything having to do with God; hot in that he inclines people to the lust of the flesh and worldly pride and rouses their desire for their own praise. He comes like a smooth-talking friend, but is really like a dog that bites. He comes like a soothing charmer, but is really the worst of ensnarers.

When he comes, tell him: 'I do not want you, for your ends are evil.' When, however, the good spirit comes, tell him: 'Come like fire, Lord, and set my heart aflame! Though I am unworthy to receive you, yet for my part I need you.

You will not be better because of me, nor do you need what I have, but I will become better through you and, without you, I am nothing.' ”

Christ speaks to the bride about three kinds of law, namely, ecclesial law, imperial law, and common law. He admonishes her to live according to a fourth kind of law, namely, the divine, spiritual law, that is, to live in humility, in unwavering, perfect, and catholic faith and in divine charity, putting God ahead of everything. In this way, spiritual honors and riches in heaven are acquired in the glory of eternity.

Chapter 111

The Son speaks to the bride and says: "There are three laws. The first is ecclesial law. The second is imperial law. The third is common law. All these kinds of law are written on dead animal skins. However, there is also a spiritual law, which is not written on skins but in the book of life. This law is never lost or destroyed by old age. It is not wearisome to keep nor is it a difficult possession to have. Every good law should be ordered toward the salvation of the soul, the fulfillment of God's commandments, the avoidance of evil, and the obtainment of those goods that ought to be desired with prudence. There is a phrase in the law written on skins that says 'in order to obtain this or that.' Thus, in order to obtain something, one of four conditions is necessary: It is either a gift made to someone out of trusted love and intimacy, or because of inheritance, or because of partitioning, or as compensation for humble acts of service.

It is similar with the spiritual law. The spiritual law is to know and love God and delight in him. In this law are found the spiritual honors and riches that consist in exchanging all creatures for the Creator, surrendering one's own will to God, loving virtues and giving up the world for heaven. These riches are obtained in four ways. First, through charity: Just as a worldly ruler gives someone gifts out of charity, even without antecedent merit, so too I created and redeemed and daily maintain and honor humankind despite human ingratitude. Moreover, all those who wholeheartedly love me and desire nothing but me will have on earth the virtue that is written in the heart by God's finger and in heaven have the honor that is written in the book of life, which is life eternal.

Second, spiritual honor is obtained through inheritance. Through my taking on a human nature and through my passion, I purchased heaven for humankind and opened it up to them with hereditary right. Man sold his divine inheritance to the devil, exchanging eternal joy for a puny fruit, the tree of life for forbidden food, truth for falsehood. Likewise, in obedience to the Father, I tore up the letter of disobedience. I made up for the sweetness of fruit by the bitter suffering of my heart. I earned the tree of life for humankind by my death. I brought humanity back and established all truth through faith in my own humanity. Therefore, whoever believes in

the words of my truth and imitates me will obtain by inheritance both spiritual riches and my grace.

Third, spiritual honor is obtained through partition. This occurs when a person partitions or separates himself from every delight in carnal pleasures, changing carnal lust into abstinence, wealth into poverty, reputation into lowly submission, earthly relatives for the company of God's friends, the vision of the world for the vision of God. Fourth, spiritual honor is obtained by means of humble acts of service. This happens when a person struggles patiently in God's service like a valiant soldier in battle, serving him in humility and faith like a servant, dispensing the goods entrusted to him with mercy and justice like a good steward, on the lookout for temptations like a good scout. Such a person is worthy of the honors and spiritual riches that are written not on animal skins but in the animate soul. The system of the threefold written law is useful indeed for the carrying out of justice, but the spiritual law is agreeable when it comes to earning a reward.

Hence, my daughter, seek to obtain spiritual honor through charity by loving nothing as much as me. Seek it through inheritance by firmly believing what the church teaches. Seek it through acts of humility by doing everything for my glory. You have been called in my law. Therefore, you are bound to keep my law. My law means living in accordance with my will. As a good priest lives in accordance with ecclesial law, so you, too, should live in accordance with the law of my humility by taking after my friends. Every temporal law tends in part to the honor of the world and in part to its contempt. My law, however, alone tends to heaven, for no one before or after me has as fully understood how glorious is the delight of the heavenly kingdom as have I and anyone to whom I wish to reveal it.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her to beware especially of the vice of pride, not to be puffed up over her physical beauty or her possessions or her family. The proud man is compared to a butterfly with broad wings and a tiny body.

Chapter 112

The Son speaks to the bride: "Do not be disturbed by their pride, for it will quickly pass away. Among the species of flies there is one called the butterfly. It has broad wings and a tiny body. It also has many colors. First, it can fly high because of its lightness and thinness, but as it rises in the air, it quickly descends and lands on whatever is closest, whether rocks or wood, because it has so little strength in its body.

This species of fly symbolizes proud people. They have broad wings and a tiny body, for their mind is swollen with pride like a skin inflated with air. They think they have what they have because they deserve it. They put themselves ahead of others and consider themselves to be worthier than others. They would spread their own name throughout the whole world, if they could. Yet they descend and fall, because they do not recognize that their life is brief and momentary. Second, proud persons have many colors like a butterfly, for they are proud of their physical beauty, their possessions, and their family, and change their status with every contrivance of their pride. Yet when they die, they are but dust. Third, when the proud reach the highest point in their pride, they descend rapidly and fall dangerously to their deaths.

Therefore, beware of pride, for it turns God's face away from you, and my grace cannot enter into anyone whom pride possesses."

Christ admonishes the bride to live humbly and not to care about fame or a great name, for he did not choose great scholars to preach the gospel but humble fishermen.

Chapter 113

The Son speaks: "Let whoever so wish read the scriptures, and they shall find that I made a prophet out of a shepherd and filled youths and simple people with the spirit of prophecy. It is true that not everyone has yet received my saving words, yet, in order to make my love known, my words have reached most people. Likewise, I did not choose scholars to

preach the gospel but fishermen. In this way, they could not boast of their own wisdom. Thus, everyone would know that, just as God is wondrous and inconceivable, so too his works are inscrutable, and that he works the greatest miracles with the least of means. That person takes up a heavy load who runs after the world in order to get glory for himself and carry out his own desires.

I will give you the example of a certain man. He sought after the world with all his desire, acquired a great name for himself in the world and placed a heavy load of sins on his back. Now, therefore, he has obtained a great name in hell, a most heavy load instead of a reward, and a more prominent position of punishment. Some descended to that place before him, some along with him, still others after him. The ones that descended before him are those who, with their help and advice, encouraged him in spreading his wickedness. The retribution for his deeds descended along with him. Those that will descend after him are those who imitate his example.

The first cry out to him as though from a battle scene. They say: 'Since you listened to our advice, we burn more hotly because of your presence. May you therefore be accursed and worthy of being hung where the rope does not break and the fire remains forever. In return for your pride and ambition may you feel the worst sort of shame.' His deeds cry out and say: 'O, wretch, the earth was incapable of feeding you with her fruit, because you wanted it all. Gold and silver could not fill your desire, and you have therefore been left empty of everything. For that reason, living crows will tear your soul to pieces - it shall be mangled but never diminish, decompose yet still live.'

Those that descend after him cry out: 'Alas, that you were ever born! Your sensual desire shall become for you such a hatred of God that you will not want to speak a single word with which God might be soothed. In God's love there is every comfort and noble delight and indescribable joy - none of which we deserve due to imitating you - so may you have the sadness and discord of the company of devils, deformity instead of honor, fire in return for your lust, cold in return for your love, unrest in return for

your comfort-seeking. Instead of the great name that you bore so unworthily, may you have revilement. Instead of a glorious throne, may you get the most despicable place!"

The story shows what rewards they deserve who get involved in such things against God's ordinance."

ADDITION

A certain knight was always eager to contrive new fashions, and he led many people to perdition by his words and examples. He felt ill will toward Lady Bridget and, because he did not dare himself to speak against her, he incited another person to say insulting words to her while pretending to be drunk. While she was at the dinner table and leading men were listening, this man said: "Lady, you dream too much. You spend too much time in vigils. It would be better for you to drink more and to sleep more. Has God abandoned those in the religious life and converses now with the proud and worldly? It is vain to trust in your words."

While he was saying such things, those present wished to punish him, but Bridget did not permit them, saying: "Let him speak, for God has sent him. All my life, I have sought my own praise and blasphemed God, why should I not hear what is only right? He is just telling me the truth."

When that knight heard about this, he repented and was reconciled with the lady. He came to Rome and went to his rest there in a praiseworthy death.

Christ warns the bride to beware of dealing with worldly people. That is called the devil's roast. The Virgin Mary teaches her to have an upright intention in all her virtuous actions in order to give more glory to God, for many people serve God in their activity, but their wrongful intention casts shadows on all the good they do.

Chapter 114

The Son speaks: "Watch out for the devil's roast, the one he cooks on the fires of lust and desire. When fat is put on a fire, something necessarily

starts dripping from it. Sins proceed in this way from worldly dealings and worldly company. Though you do not know what is in a person's conscience, external signs bring out what is hidden in the mind.”

The Mother speaks: ”Your every action should be rational and your intention upright. This means that you should do whatever you do with the intention of giving glory to God and preferring spiritual gains to bodily enjoyment. Many people, indeed, serve God in their activity, but their wrongful intention casts shadows on all the good they do. A comparison will help you to understand this. Take the animal called a bear. When it is starving and catches sight of its desired prey, it brings one foot down on its prey and looks for somewhere to plant its other foot firmly so the prey cannot get or be taken away, until the bear has eaten it up and turned it to its desire. The bear keeps continual watch on its prey and does not look around for gold or fragrant herbs or trees, but only looks for some hidden and secure footing or something to grasp so that it can safely and securely hold on to the prey it has caught.

Many people serve me with prayers and fasting out of a kind of fear, for they have in mind the terrible punishment and also my great mercy. They seek me through certain exterior actions, but they go against the commandments of my Son in their intention. Like the bear, these people set their whole intention on the lust of the flesh and worldly desire, but, because they are afraid of losing their life as well as of future suffering, they serve me with the intention of not losing grace or incurring punishment. This is quite clear, for they never contemplate my Son's passion, which is like the most precious gold, or imitate the lives of the saints, who are like precious gems, nor pay any regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are like fragrant herbs. They do not give up their own will and perform the will of my Son, but they only want something on which to lean in order to sin more securely and gain success in the world.

Their reward will be slight, for their actions proceed from their cold hearts. Just as the bear, once it has consumed its prey, does not care anymore about a secure footing, so when the final hour comes for them, and their sensual lusts are over and done with, their secure footing in me

will be of little value to them, because they did not give up their own will to carry out my will, nor did they seek me out of love but out of fear. However, if their intention is perfectly corrected, their deeds will soon be revived and, if any deed is lacking, their good intention will be counted as a deed.”

ADDITION

This was a provost who lived according to his pleasure. When he came to Rome, he reformed his life in a very praiseworthy manner. When he had visited Monte Gargano and the shrine of St. Nicholas and had returned to Lady Bridget, whose advice he followed completely, he said that he wondered why the great and famous city of Siponte, where the bodies of so many saints rested, had been destroyed.

On the following day, the Son of God appeared and said to the lady: ”Your friend is wondering about the city that is destroyed. Truly, daughter, the sins of the inhabitants merited this. Even other cities have merited similar things, but a friend of mine lived there. He had perfect love for me and rebuked and protested against their morals continuously. When he saw their obstinacy, he tearfully begged me to let the place become desolate rather than let so many souls be in daily peril. I saw his tears, and since no one tried to placate me fully, I allowed those things to happen that we are now speaking about.”

She said to him: ”O Lord, it is sad that the relics and bodies of many good persons lie there as though they were unclean and unprotected.” Christ answered: ”Just as I have the souls of my chosen ones within me, so too I take care of the relics of my friends - who are my treasure - until they receive the twofold reward promised to them.”

The lady spoke again. ”My dear Lord, I do believe that many graces and indulgences were granted in Siponte by the popes. Now that the walls have been destroyed, have the graces also been abolished?” Christ answered: ”What place is holier than Jerusalem where I, God himself, left my footprints? What place is now held in greater contempt than Jerusalem,

inhabited and oppressed by infidels? Yet whoever goes to Jerusalem will meet with the same graces and indulgences as before. It is likewise with Siponte: Whoever goes there out of love and with a perfect intention will share in the same grace and blessing that the city had in the time of its glory, because of the faith of the pilgrims and their labor of love.”

Christ speaks to the bride about how to free a certain person possessed by the devil. He tells her that the soul has inner, spiritual limbs just as the body has outer, bodily limbs. The Lord gives a beautiful explanation of all this.

Chapter 115

The Son speaks: ”You are like a wheel that follows after that which goes before it. You should thus follow after my will. I told you earlier about a certain person whose soul was possessed by the devil. Now I will tell you in what part of the body he is trapped. I am like a man who says to his guard: 'There are three places of custody in your house. In the first are those who deserve to be deprived of life. In the second are those who are to lose one of their limbs. In the third are those who are to be whipped and to lose their skin.' The guard says to him: 'Lord, if some are to lose their life, others to be mutilated and others to be whipped, why put off their judgment? If they are sentenced quickly, they will forget their pain.'

The Lord answered: 'I do not what I do without a cause. Those who are to be deprived of life must wait for a time in order that good people might see their misery and become better, and bad people might feel fear and become more careful in the future. It is necessary that those who are to be mutilated should first experience anxiety so as to retract in their hearts the evils they have done and feel sorrow for the crimes they have committed. Those who are to be whipped should also be tested by sorrow so that those who had forgotten themselves in their delight may get to know themselves in their sorrow and become that much more careful not to commit such crimes the more difficult it is for them to gain their liberty.'

I am the Lord who has the devil as a guard, as it were, in order to punish the wicked according to their individual deserts. Power has been given to him over this soul, but I will now explain to you in what part of the body. For just as the body is arranged in its outer limbs, so too the body ought to be arranged spiritually. As the body has marrow, bones, and flesh, and blood in the flesh and flesh in the blood, so too the soul ought to have the three faculties of memory, conscience, and intellect. There are some people who understand lofty scriptural matters but have no reason. They are lacking a limb. There are others who have a rational awareness but no intelligence. Still others have intellect but no memory. These are gravely sick. Those who are healthy in their souls have healthy reason, memory, and intellect.

The body has three repositories. The first is the heart. A slender membrane covers the heart as a protection against anything impure touching it. Even if only very small stains should touch the heart, a person would die right away. The second repository is the stomach. The third is the bowels by means of which harmful substances are purged away. The soul should also have three repositories in a spiritual sense. The first is a godly desire. This is like the heart. It means that the soul desires nothing more fervently than me, her God. Otherwise, if any base affection, however small, should enter there, then the soul gets stained right away. The second repository is the stomach, that is, the wise disposition of time and work. As all food is dissolved and digested in the stomach, so all time and every thought and deed should be disposed according to God's plan in an orderly, useful, and prudent way. The third repository is the bowels, that is, godly contrition, by means of which impure things are purged and the food of divine wisdom tastes better.

The body has three limbs with which it advances: the head, the hands, and the feet. The head denotes divine love. As all five senses are in the head, so in divine love there is a sweet taste for the soul of whatever is said or heard or seen of God, and whatever is commanded is carried out with constancy. Just as a man without a head is dead, so too, without love, the soul, whose life is God, is dead to God. The hands symbolize faith. As there are several fingers on a hand, so there are many articles of faith,

though there is only one faith. Through faith every divine intention is fulfilled, and faith should be operative in every good action. As outward work is done with the hands, so too the Holy Spirit operates inwardly through faith. Faith upholds all the virtues, for where there is no faith, love and good works are abolished.

Hope is the soul's feet. Through hope the soul comes to God. Just as the body advances on its feet, so too the soul draws close to God on the footsteps of divine desire and hope. The skin that covers the whole body symbolizes divine consolation that comforts the sensitive soul. Although the devil is sometimes allowed to disturb the memory, and sometimes the hands and feet, still God always defends the soul like a fighter and comforts her like a kind father and heals her like a doctor so she does not die.

The soul of this man of whom I spoke to you was caught when she deserved to lose her hands due to her wavering faith, inasmuch as she did not have the right faith. However, it is now time to show mercy for a twofold reason: first, because of my charity; second, because of the prayers of my chosen ones. Hence, let my friend read the above-mentioned words about him. He should do three things. First, he should restore ill-gotten goods; second, he should procure absolution from the Roman Curia for his disobedience; third, he should not receive my body in the sacrament of communion before receiving absolution.”

Christ's lament to the bride about the Gentiles and the Jews, but especially about bad Christians because they do not receive the holy sacraments with devotion and purity as they ought, and because they are not mindful of creation and redemption and divine consolation.

Chapter 116

The Son speaks: "I will give you a figurative description of three men.

The first of them might say: 'I do not believe in you either as God or as man.' Such a one is a pagan Gentile. The second, who is a Jew, believes

in me as God but not as man. The third, who is a Christian, believes in me as God and man but does not trust my words.

I am the one over whom the voice of the Father was heard to say: 'This is my Son.' In my divine nature I lament that men do not want to listen to me. I cried out and said: 'I am the beginning: If you believe in me, you will have eternal life,' but they scorned me. They witnessed my divine power when I raised the dead and did much else, but they gave it no consideration.

On behalf of my human nature, too, I lament that nobody cares about the things that I established in the Holy Church. I placed, as it were, seven vessels in the church by means of which everyone was to be purified. I established baptism for the purgation of original sin; chrism as a sign of divine reconciliation; holy unction for strength in the face of death; penance for the remission of all sins; the holy words with which the sacred offerings are consecrated and established; the priesthood in appreciation, recognition, and remembrance of divine charity; matrimony as the union of hearts. These ought to be received with humility, kept in purity, celebrated without avarice. Nowadays, however, they are received with pride, kept in impure vessels, celebrated with avarice.

Moreover, my lament is that I was born and I died for the salvation of humankind in order that, even if people refused to love me because I created them, at least they would love me because I had redeemed them. Nowadays, however, they cast me out of their hearts as though I were a leper, and they shun me as though I were an unclean rag. In my divinity, I lament again that they refuse the consolation of my divinity and give its charity no consideration.”

God himself runs out to meet those who truly desire him; he comforts them like a loving father and makes difficult things easy for them.

Chapter 117

While someone was praying the Our Father, the bride heard the Spirit say: "Friend, I tell you on behalf of my divine nature that you shall have your inheritance with your Father, and, second, on behalf of my human nature, that you will be my temple. Third, on behalf of the Spirit, I tell you that you will not have temptations beyond what you can bear. The Father shall defend you, my human nature shall assist you, the Spirit shall set you aflame.

As when a mother hears the voice of her son and she joyfully runs out to meet him, and as when a father sees his son struggling with his work and he runs out to meet him halfway and shares the load with him, so too I run out to meet my friends and make every difficult thing both easy for them and a joy to carry. As when a person sees something delightful and cannot rest until he gets close to it, so I draw close to those who desire me."

ADDITION

This monk saw in the hands of the priest at the time of the elevation of the body of Christ our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a child saying to him: "I am the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin."

He even foresaw the manner and time of his death within a year, about which one can read in several chapters in the legend on St. Bridget. The monk's name was Gerekinus.

Christ speaks to the bride and says that the Father, by fulfilling their good intention to do good, draws to himself those whom he sees gladly changing their bad will to a good will through a desire to make amends for past offenses.

Chapter 118

The Son speaks: "Whoever wishes to join with me should convert his will to me and repent his past offenses, and he is then drawn to perfection

by my Father. The Father draws those people who freely change their bad will into good will and desire to make amends for past offenses.

How does the Father draw them? He does so by fulfilling their good intention to do good. If their desire were not good, the Father would not have anything to draw. Some people find me so cold that my ways do not please them at all. Yet others find me so hot that they seem to be on fire whenever they have to perform any good deeds. Others, however, find me so agreeable that they want nothing but me. To these I shall give a happiness that will never end.”

The Mother describes seven good things in Christ and their seven opposites that people give him in return.

Chapter 119

The Mother speaks: ”My Son has seven goods. He is most powerful, like an all-consuming fire. Second, he is most wise, and his wisdom can no more be comprehended than one can drain the ocean. Third, he is most strong, like an immovable mountain. Fourth, he has the greatest virtue, like the apiarian herb. Fifth, he is most beautiful, like the shining sun. Sixth, he is most just, like a king who pardons no one in contradiction to justice. Seventh, he is most loving, like a lord who gives himself up for the life of his servant.

Contrary to these seven, he endured their seven opposites. Contrary to his power, he became like a worm. Contrary to his wisdom, he was counted as the most foolish. Contrary to his strength, he was bound as a child in swaddling clothes. Contrary to his beauty, he was like a leper, and contrary to his virtue, he stood naked and bound. Contrary to his justice, he was regarded as a liar. Contrary to his loving-kindness, he was put to death.”

Christ tells the bride that there are two kinds of pleasure, spiritual and carnal; spiritual pleasure is when the soul delights in the kindnesses of God.

Chapter 120

The Son speaks: "It is as though there were a membrane between me and that man. Because of it, my sweetness gives him no pleasure, for something else pleases him instead of me." The bride heard this and said to the Lord: "Can he never then feel any kind of pleasure?" The Lord answered: "There are two kinds of pleasure, spiritual and carnal. Carnal or natural pleasure is when refreshment is taken as required by necessity. In that case a person should think as follows to himself: 'O Lord, you who have commanded us to take refreshment only when necessary, praise be to you! Grant me the grace not to let sin enter secretly as I take my refreshment.' If pleasure in temporal goods arises, a person should think as follows: 'Lord, all earthly things are but earth and fleeting. Grant, therefore, that I may make such use of them as to be able to render an account to you for all of them.'

Spiritual pleasure is when the soul delights in the kindnesses of God, and makes use of temporal things and busies herself about them only unwillingly and by necessity. The membrane is broken when God becomes pleasant to the soul and when she keeps the fear of God continuously in mind."

It is not the cowl that makes the monk but the virtue of obedience and the observance of the rule. True contrition of heart along with a purpose of amendment snatches the soul from the hands of the devil, even if perfect contrition is lacking.

Chapter 121

The devil appeared and said: "Look, that monk has flown away and only his shape remains." And the Lord said to him: "Explain what you mean." The devil answered: "That I shall, though unwillingly. The true

monk is his own keeper. His cowl is obedience and the observance of his vows. As the body is covered by clothing, so the soul is covered by virtues. Therefore, the outer habit has no value unless the inner one is maintained, for it is virtue, not vestment, that makes the monk. This monk flew off when he thought as follows: 'I know my sin and I shall make amends and never sin again with the grace of God.' With this intention he flew away from me and is now yours." The Lord said to him: "How is it that his shape remains?" The devil said: "When he does not recall his past sins nor repents as perfectly of them as he should."

EXPLANATION

This brother saw in the hands of the priest at the time of the elevation of the body of Christ our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a child saying to him: "I am the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin." He even foresaw the manner and time of his death within a year, about which one can read in several chapters in the legend on the sainted lady. The monk's name was Gerekinus. He lived a most pure life. When he was about to die, he saw writing in gold containing three golden letters: "P," "O," and "T." As he was describing it to the other monks, he said: "Come, Peter, make haste Olof and Thord." Once he had called for them, he went to his rest. The three monks died within a week following him.

Chapter 55 in Extravagantes (Book 9) is also about the same brother: "A monk of holy life, etc."

About how the life of a certain dissolute and lukewarm man resembles a narrow and dangerous bridge, and about how, if he does not soon turn himself around by leaping onto the ship of life, penance, and virtue, he will be cast headlong by his enemy, the devil, down into the deep abyss.

Chapter 122

"That man is my mortal enemy, for he mocks me with derision. He satisfies his every wish and desire as best he can. He is like someone lying on a narrow bridge with a great abyss to his left. Anyone falling into it

cannot climb out of it again. To his right there is a ship. If he leaps onto it and makes some effort to escape, he still has some hope of survival. This bridge stands for his lamentable, brief life. He does not stand on it like a contender or even like a pilgrim, making daily progress and advancing on his way. Instead, he lies there lazily, longing to drink the waters of sensuality. Two fates await him if he gets up off the bridge. Either he will fall into the abyss, that is, into deepest hell, if he turns to his left, that is, to deeds of carnality. Or, if he leaps onto the ship, he will escape with an effort in the sense that, if he accepts the discipline and ordinances of the Holy Church, it will take him some effort but he will save himself by doing so. So, may he turn himself around quickly, before the enemy casts him headlong off the bridge, for then, indeed, he will cry out without being heard and will be punished in eternity.”

ADDITION

When this man saw that the king was unmoved and did not attend to him in his customary manner, he felt ill will toward Lady Bridget. When she was passing through a narrow street, he poured water on her from a window above. However, she said to the bystanders, ”May the Lord forgive him and not requite him for it in the next life.” Christ appeared then to the lady at mass, saying: ”The man who poured water on you from the window out of ill will thirsts for blood. He has shed blood. He longs for the earth and not for me. He speaks out boldly against me. He worships his own flesh instead of me, his God. He has shut me out of himself and out of his heart. Let him beware lest he die in his blood.”

The man lived for a short time after this, and then died with blood flowing out of his nose, just as she had foretold.

Christ defends his bride, Bridget, that is, a soul converted from worldliness to the spiritual life, whom her father and mother, sister and brother tried to dissuade from his love and from chastity in marriage.

Chapter 123

The Son speaks to the bride: "I am like a bridegroom who has betrothed himself to a bride whom her father and mother, sister and brother want to have back. Her father says: 'Give me back my daughter, for she was born from my blood.' Her mother says: 'Give me back my daughter, for she was fed with my milk.' Her sister says: 'Give me back my sister, for she was brought up with me.' Her brother says: 'Give me back my sister, for she falls under my authority.' The bridegroom answered them: 'Father, she may have been born from your blood, but now she must be filled with my blood. Mother, you may have fed her with your milk, but I will now feed her with my delight. Sister, she may have been brought up according to your fashions, but she shall now live in my fashion. Brother, she may have been under your authority so far, but now she is under my authority.'

This is what has happened to you. If your father, that is, if the lust of the flesh demands you back, it pertains to me to fill you with my love. If your mother, that is, if worldly cares demand you back, it pertains to me to feed you with the milk of my consolation. If your sister, that is, if the fashions of worldly society demand you back, you must rather live in my fashion. If your brother, that is, if self-will demands you back, you are obliged to carry out my will."

About how Blessed Agnes places on the bride of Christ a crown with seven precious stones, namely, the gems of patience in suffering.

Chapter 124

Agnes speaks to the bride of Christ and says: "Come, daughter, and put on a crown made from seven precious gems. The crown stands for nothing other than the proof of patience, welded together out of hardship and adorned with garlands by God.

The first gem of your crown is jasper. It was put there by the man who jeeringly said that he did not know what spirit made you speak, and that it would be better for you to spin and sew after the fashion of women and not

to discuss scripture. Just as jasper sharpens one's vision and brings joy to the mind, so too, out of hardship, God brings joy to the mind, enlightens the intellect in spiritual matters, and mortifies the soul from disorderly impulses.

The second gem is a sapphire. This was put there by the man who flattered you to your face but vilified you behind your back. Just as sapphire is of a celestial color and preserves the health of parts of the body, so human malice puts the righteous to the test in order to make them celestial, and it preserves the parts of the soul so that they do not become puffed up with pride.

The third gem is an emerald. This was put there by the man who asserted that you said things that you had neither thought of nor spoken. Just as the emerald is fragile in itself yet has such a beautiful green color, so too a lie is soon annihilated but makes the soul beautiful in a reward for her patience.

The fourth gem is a pearl. This was put there by the man who disparaged a friend of God's in your presence. His disparagement upset you more than it would have done if it had been about yourself. Just as the pearl is white and beautiful and eases the suffering of the heart, so too the sorrow of love introduces God into the soul, and tames the passions of anger and impatience.

The fifth gem is topaz. This was put there by the man that spoke harshly to you but to whom you, on the contrary, made a gentle answer. Just as topaz is of the color of gold and preserves chastity and beauty, so nothing is more beautiful and acceptable to God than to love the one who hurts you and to pray for those who persecute you.

The sixth gem is a diamond. This was put there by the man who hurt you physically but whom you endured patiently and whom you did not wish to disgrace. Just as a diamond cannot be broken by smashing but only with the blood of goats, so too it pleases God when a person overlooks

and, for God's sake, does not bother about physical hurts but is ever thinking of what God has done for the sake of humankind.

The seventh gem is a carbuncle. This was put there by the man who brought the false message to you that your son Karl was dead, and you bore it patiently, entrusting yourself to God. Just as a carbuncle shines in a house and looks very beautiful on a ring, so too one who is patient at the loss of something dear attracts God's love and shines in the sight of the saints and is as pleasing as a precious gem.

Therefore, my daughter, be steadfast, for still more gems are needed to add to your crown. Consider that Abraham and Job became better and more renowned through their trials, and John became holier by bearing witness to the truth.”

God's Mother speaks to her daughter, the bride of Christ, and offers a lovely allegory of seven animals denoting four kinds of immoral men and three kinds of virtuous men.

Chapter 125

The Mother speaks: ”There are seven animals. The first has enormous horns and is quite conceited about them. It wages war against other animals but dies quickly, because the enormous size of its horns does not allow it to run with any speed but gets it entangled in briars and branches. The second animal is small with only one horn that has a precious gem beneath it. This animal cannot be caught except by a maiden. When it sees a maiden, it runs to her lap and is thus killed by her. The third animal has no joints, so it rests leaning heavily against a tree. An attentive hunter cuts the tree midway, so when the animal tries to rest in its accustomed way, the tree falls down and the animal is taken.

The fourth animal seems gentle and does not attack anyone with its feet or horns. However, anyone who smells its breath becomes a leper, because this animal is by nature completely leprous inside. The fifth

animal is always fearful and foresees and suspects any traps. The sixth animal fears nothing but itself. If it sees its own shadow, it runs away from it as from death. It always wants to live and dwell in darkness and in hiding. The seventh animal does not fear anything, not even death, for it does not sense death ahead of time. This animal has four remarkable features. First, it experiences an incredible inner solace. Second, it does not worry about food, for it eats the basest things on earth. Third, it never stands still but is always running. Fourth, it rests even while walking and makes its advance in a measured way.

The first animal resembles a man who is conceited about his own dignity. Because he is slow and heavy in running toward good deeds, he gets easily caught when he is not careful. The second animal that is proud of the precious gem beneath its horn symbolizes the man who is confident in and presumptuous of the precious gem of chastity, who disdains to be moved by any warnings and regards himself as better than others. He has to be carefully on guard in order not to be caught by pride, which has the face of a maiden but a most powerful sting. The third animal, without any joints, resembles the man who lacks the joints of spiritual feelings and so gets captured by the things that please him precisely when he is expecting to take his rest in safety. The fourth animal, which is completely leprous inside, symbolizes the man who is completely leprous with pride. Anyone who joins with him in agreement becomes defiled.

The three other animals will be revealed in their time. The first animal is like a piously doubting Thomas and like a polished and square-set stone. The second is like gold in the fire and like a golden pipe kept in the finest casing. The third is like a painting that is susceptible of even nobler colors. If those immoral men denoted by the four animals above convert to me, I shall run out to meet them on the way and ease their burden. If not, I shall send them an animal swifter than a tiger to consume them. As it is written, their days shall be few, their children fatherless, and their wives widows, and their honors shall be turned into reproach and shame.”

EXPLANATION

The first animal, that is, the first bishop proud of his noble birth, was converted by the words of the Holy Spirit. He came to Rome and accompanied Lady Bridget to Naples. While they were in Benevento, he was suffering seriously from a kidney stone. The Holy Spirit spoke to him through the lady as he lay sick: "The king of Israel was commanded to put a poultice on his wound. Let this man do likewise: May he receive into his heart perfect love for God, which is the best medicine, and he shall immediately feel healthy." When he heard this, he made a vow and regained both his mental and physical strength. One can also read about this bishop in Book 3, Chapter 12.

The second animal, that is, the second bishop, was a man of great purity, about whom see Book 3, Chapter 13.

The third animal, that is, the third bishop, who was compared to an elephant, made a change for the better. Christ speaks again: "What did that elephant advise? Was it not to celebrate a marriage illegally so as not to waste expenses already made, saying that a dispensation could easily be acquired from the pope? Listen now to what I say. Anyone who knowingly and deliberately sins against God, unless he shows very great contrition, will meet with God's judgment and unhappiness in the world. A person who places another's sinful burden on his own back sins more seriously, for he has neither the fear of God nor seeks the salvation of the soul. What great presumption! What a lack of charity to have the keys of justice in one's hand and to make an attempt against the keys and justice for the sake of some small corruptible gain! May he therefore hasten to appease God and bring that couple to fruitful penance and fitting absolution! Otherwise his days will be shortened, and he shall come to my judgment, and the fall of his church will be so great that it will be rebuilt with difficulty, and his clergy will suffer, and their wishes will come to naught and they themselves will be held in contempt. You, however, my daughter, shall write to the couple whom you know, and say that, unless they make amends and do something to deserve absolution, they will not bear long-lived fruit, and their children will not live many years, and that the goods they have collected will go to strangers."

Again about the same bishop: "This bishop came to me as humble as the son who had spent his inheritance and eaten husks and returned humbly to his father. Truly, daughter, those worldly concerns are like husks once the innermost grain, that is, God, has been expelled from the heart, when one desires meaningless and fruitless activity and prefers the world to God. However, because this bishop is already starting to get to know me and himself, I will be like a loving father to him and forget the past. I shall run out to meet midway and give him a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet and a fatted calf to eat. From this day on, my love will be more fervent in his actions, divine patience and wisdom will more perfectly be seen in him to attract his fellow men, and he will more frequently and attentively receive and honor my body. My dearest Mother, the patron of his church, has gained this gift for him." One can read about the same man at the beginning of Chapter 130, Book 4.

The fourth animal, that is, the bishop who continued in his leprosy was summoned hence suddenly and without the sacraments. About this man, see Book 6, Chapter 97.

The fifth animal was like a square-set stone, a man temperate and prudent in every way. About him, see Book 3, Chapter 33.

The sixth animal, that is, the sixth bishop was a God-fearing and self-examining man who governed his church wisely and obtained exemptions for it from many duties. When he died, Christ said: "The Golden scripture says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That is true, but I say that the fear of God is also the goal of perfection. This bishop had it, and came to the way of salvation by a salutary shortcut."

The seventh animal, that is, the seventh bishop was a man of great abstinence. He had zeal for God and did not keep silent about the truth, neither because of fear nor affection nor injury. He surrendered his spirit while at prayer. There are several revelations about this bishop in the Life of St. Bridget. He was the Reverend Lord Hemming, Bishop of Åbo and friend to the Blessed Virgin, as is clear from Extravagantes (Book 9), Chapter 104.

A revelation about the bishop who was the successor to the second animal.

The Son of God speaks: "Write to the bishop and tell him that rapacious birds have entered the land in order to build their nests in it. This bishop should, therefore, work together with his friends to cut their claws, so that they do not gain possession of the summits of the land nor spread out their wings among the people. Otherwise, they will use their beaks and claws to root up the fruitful areas and fly above the peaks and mountains and reduce the land to desolation and ruin."

The Virgin Mary spoke with the bride of her Son about a certain bishop for whom the bride was praying devoutly. Here she gives noteworthy instructions and offers a virtuous model according to which true bishops should live and govern themselves and their subjects spiritually and devoutly.

Chapter 126

The Mother of mercy was speaking with the bride of Christ: "What are we to do with this blind bishop? He has three characteristics. He works to please men more than God. He loves not the treasure guarded by angels but that which thieves can steal. He also loves himself more than his neighbor and more than his God." Right then the bride saw six pans of a balance, three of which were very heavy, pressed down by the weight. The other three pans were so light that they were raised up all the way to the top, because nothing was to be seen in them but a weight as light as a feather.

The Mother said: "Look at this bishop. Though he does have the three aforementioned vices, still he is ever fearful. Because of his fear, which is conducive to charity, it was given to you to see his condition. Those three heavy scale-pans symbolize his deeds against God that weigh down his soul. They appear as three to you, because he is sinking like a scale toward the world in his feelings, words, and actions. The three other lightly loaded scale-pans are rising up to God. However, his worldly affairs outweigh his

spiritual ones, since he has a greater and more zealous interest in them, so much so that the devil is already pulling him by the feet, and his snare lies ready.”

The bride answered: ”O good Mother, put something on the scales!” The Mother said to her: ”Agnes and I have been waiting to see if the bishop might perhaps recollect our love, but he does not pay much attention to our solicitude for him. However, we will do with him as would three friends sitting on the wayside who know the way and would point it out to their friend. The first would say: 'My friend, the way you have taken is neither straight nor safe. If you continue along that path, robbers will harm you and, just when you think you are safe, you will die.' The second would say: 'The way you have taken seems to be pleasant, but what good will that do you if there is mental anguish in the end?' The third would say: 'My friend, I see your infirmity. Do not be displeased, if I offer you some advice, and do not be ungrateful if I do you a special favor.' Agnes and I want to act in this way with this bishop. If he will listen to the first friend, the second will show him the way, and the third will lead him to the region of light.”

The bride was then shown the instructions that would be divinely sent to the aforementioned bishop, as follows. The Mother speaks: ”Say thus to the bishop: Though God can do all things, personal cooperation is needed in order to avoid sin and obtain divine charity. Three things lead to the avoidance of sin and three things work together for the obtainment of charity. The three things by which sin is avoided are these: faithfully repenting everything that nags one's conscience, not wanting to commit them again voluntarily, and steadfastly making amends for the offenses committed and confessed following the advice of those who live in contempt of the world.

The three things that work together for obtaining charity are these: first, asking for God's help to get rid of base pleasure and to be given the will to do what God wants. Divine charity is not obtained unless it is desired, and the desire will not be rational unless it is founded on God's charity. Thus, a person has three things before charity enters, while three

other things enter after the infusion of divine charity. Before the infusion of God's charity, a man worries about the coming of death, about the loss of honor and friends, about worldly setbacks and physical illness. Once charity has been obtained, the soul experiences joy in the hardships she suffers in the world, while the mind is uneasy about worldly possessions and finds joy in giving honor to God and in suffering for the sake of God's honor. The second thing that leads to charity is giving alms from one's superfluous means. When a bishop has the housewares and clothes appropriate for the needs of a humble prelate and not for ostentation and superfluity, then he should be content with them and distribute alms from what is left over. When the poor household servants of prelates become rich and live luxuriously on the temporal goods and possessions of other souls, then other, truly poor people will cry out profusely for vengeance upon them. The third thing that leads to charity is charitable work. For whoever would not pray even a single Our Father to obtain charity might thus please God, and divine charity would soon come to him."

Again the Mother said to Christ her Son: "Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, best of champions, swiftest in running your course and strongest in waging battle. It is written that David was a great and powerful champion, but he was nothing like you. David threw a stone at his enemy running up at a distance. You approached your enemy on foot and broke his back. David took his enemy's sword and cut off his head while he lay prostrate on the ground. You took away your enemy's sword while he was standing. Your patience overcame him while he was alive; you crushed the might of the mighty with your humility. You are, therefore, the warrior of warriors. No one was ever or ever will be like you. From a mighty father, a stalwart son has arisen who has freed his father and brothers. Hence, most loving champion, I ask that you may deign to grant to this bishop the knowledge of how to fight and the strength to run the course of warriors so that he may take his seat with the true champions who have given their lives for your life and offered their blood for your blood."

The Son answered: "A charitable prayer is not to be neglected. Scripture says that no one comes to me unless the Father draws him. If he who draws something is strong but the thing drawn too heavy, his effort is

soon wasted and comes to naught. Besides, if the object drawn is tied up, then it can neither help itself nor the person drawing it, should that person fall. If the object drawn is unclean, then it is loathsome to draw it. For this reason, it is necessary that the thing that must be drawn and wants to be drawn should first be cleansed and properly prepared, so that it becomes easy and pleasing to draw along by hand. Due to my Mother's prayers, however, whenever this bishop starts looking for the way, the right way will be pointed out to him."

Then the Mother spoke some additional words to the bride: "Hear, daughter, you to whom it has been given to hear spiritual truths. I told you earlier that if the bishop looks for the way, it will be pointed out to him. I shall now explain the way to him. If this bishop proposes to walk along the path spoken of in the gospel, and to be one of the few, he should first have three things before starting out on it. He should first put off the burden that besets him and weighs him down - I mean his worldly desires and money bags - by not loving worldly superfluity and pride but by getting from it only the needs consistent with the decent and humble sustenance of a bishop and by putting everything else to use for the glory of God. This is what that good man Matthew did. He left behind the heavy burden of the world, which he had not understood to be burdensome until he had found a light and pleasant burden.

In the second place, the bishop should be girded for the journey, to use the words of scripture. When Tobias was sent by his father to get the money, he found the angel standing there girded. What does the angel symbolize if not the priest and bishop of the Lord? He must be pure in body and affections, for, next to a prophet, a priest is the angel of the Lord of hosts, for God, whom the angels see and adore, has received him and consecrated him. The angel appeared to Tobias girded for the journey because every priest and bishop should be girded with the belt of divine justice, ready to give his life for his sheep, ready to speak the truth in his words, ready to point out the way of justice in himself, ready to suffer for the sake of justice and truth, not neglecting it due to threats and taunts, neither keeping silent out of false friendship nor practicing dissimulation on the advice of others. To each bishop thus girded with righteousness and

trusting not in himself but in God, Tobias, that is, the righteous man, shall come, and righteous men shall follow after him, for good example and good deeds are worth more than naked words.

In the third place, he should eat bread and water, just as we read about Elijah, who found bread and water at his head and was urged by the angel to eat, for a long journey awaited him. What is the bread eaten by Elijah from which he derived such strength, if not the material and spiritual goods given to him? For material bread was given to him as a lesson to others, so that people might understand it to be God's wish that they have a moderate amount of necessities for strengthening of the body. Moreover, spiritual strength and inspiration was given to the prophet by which he was able to labor on for forty days so that people might know that man does not live by bread alone but by God's every word. For, if God had not given such consolation to the prophet, he would certainly have given up out of weakness, for man is weak in himself but strong in God. Everyone who stands firm and strong is strong and brave by reason of God. Therefore, because this bishop is weak, we lay down that he should take the morsel of bread, that is, to love God above all things, with order, and purely, truly, perfectly. With order, so as to love the world without any superfluity. Purely, so as not to love any sin in himself or his neighbor or desire to imitate any base habits.

Truly, so as to allow no sin due to trusting to his own good works but so as to govern himself wisely in order not to succumb by being overzealous or to tend perhaps toward sin due to cowardice or the imitation of base men or nonchalance about guilt. Perfectly, so that nothing tastes as sweet to him as God. We bid him also to take some water along with the bread of charity. What is this water if not to think continually on the bitterness of Christ's passion? Who is able to meditate worthily enough on the agony of Christ's human nature, the agony that he was undergoing at the moment when he prayed for the chalice of his passion to be taken from him and when drops of his blood came from his body? That sweat was bloody indeed, because the blood of God's human nature was consumed with the natural fear he was suffering in order to show that he was true man, not a phantasm nor immune to suffering. So, have the

bishop drink this water by considering how God stood before Herod and Pilate, what pain and scorn he experienced on the cross and how a lance opened his side from which flew blood and water.

Once the bishop has these three things, then it is useful for him to know how to order his time from the beginning of the day until night. When the bishop first awakens after nighttime, he should immediately give thanks for God's love in creation, for his sufferings in the redemption, for the patience with which he has for so long endured his own sins and habits. Then, when he has got out of bed and put on his clothes, he should say this: 'Ashes must with ashes be, dust with dust. Yet, since I hold the office of bishop in others' sight by the providence of God, I am clothing an ass, you, my body, ashes and dust, not for the sake of ostentation but as a covering, so that you do not appear naked. Nor do I care whether your clothing be better or worse, but only that the bishop's habit be acknowledged out of reverence for God, and that through this habit others may recognize the bishop's authority for the correction and instruction of the weak.

And so, kind God, I beg you to give me steadfastness of mind so that I do not take pride in my precious ashes nor foolishly glory in my colors. Grant me strength so that, just as a bishop's garb is more respectable than that of others due to his divine authority, the garb of my soul may be more virtuous before you, lest I be thrust down all the deeper for having held authority in an unwise manner or lest I be ignominiously stripped for having foolishly worn my venerable garb to my own damnation.' After that he should read or sing the hours, if he can. The higher the rank to which a person rises, the more he is obliged to give glory to God. However, a pure and humble heart pleases God as much in silence as in singing. After Mass has been said, or beforehand, he should fulfill his episcopal duties, whether of a material or spiritual nature, and show mercy in all his works, considering the glory of God, so that he may not be thought by the weak to care more about temporal than spiritual goods.

When he comes to the dinner table, this should be his prayer: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, you will that this corruptible body should be sustained with

material food, I ask you to help me to give my body what it needs in such a way that it does not grow sluggish from too much food nor weak from too much frugality. Inspire in me a suitable moderation so that when this man of earth lives on the things of the earth, the Lord of the earth may not be provoked to anger by his creature of earth.' While at table, he may enjoy moderate comfort with his fellow diners, but in such a way as to avoid detraction and frivolity. Above all, he must avoid saying anything that might confirm others in their vices or be an occasion of sin.

A person who is to be a light for others must consider what is fitting and proper before God, how to edify them, and what is profitable for their salvation. If bread and wine are missing from the material table, everything loses its taste. It is likewise at the spiritual table: Everything will be tasteless for the soul if the wine of spiritual joy and the bread of God's doctrine are missing. Thus, the bishop should say something to the glory of God while at table in order to strengthen his fellow diners spiritually, or else he should see to it that something edifying is read, so that at one and the same bodily meal both the body may be refreshed and the soul may be instructed.

When the meal is ended and grace has been said, the bishop should make any expedient announcements or fulfill his episcopal agenda, or catch some sleep if he needs it for his health, or else peruse books of spiritual guidance. After dinner, though, he may entertain himself with the companions of his household in a respectable way, and comfort them, for if the bow is too tightly drawn, it is soon broken. In this way, moderate enjoyment for the sake of the weakness of the flesh is pleasing to God. However, the wise bishop should behave toward his companions as a mother nursing her child does, for she anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until the child becomes used to more solid foods. He should make sure that he observes moderation in his enjoyments as well as gentleness in his restraint so as to attract his companions to God through God-fearing and humble speech. Hence, he should teach them to revere and love God, becoming in this way both their father through the divine authority in him and their mother and nurse through the well-meaning formation he gives them. If he knows that anyone in his

household is in the state of mortal sin and has not repented despite both lenient and strong admonishments, then he should separate himself from him and disown him. Otherwise, if he retains him out of convenience and worldly partiality, he will not be immune from the other's sin.

When he goes to bed, he should turn his heart to God and think over what his thoughts and affections have been that day, along with his deeds and decisions, and implore God's help and mercy with a firm purpose of improving when he can. When he gets into bed, he should pray as follows: 'Lord God, Creator of my body, look on me in your mercy. Grant me your help, so that I do not grow lazy in your service by oversleeping nor weak in your service due to lack of sleep. Give me that measure of sleep that you have prescribed for the temporal relief of the body. May the enemy not harm my body nor be allowed in your hidden judgment to get mastery of my soul.'

When he gets up out of bed, he should wash away in confession any illicit things that might have happened during the night, so that the sleep of the following night might not begin with the sins of the previous. As is written: 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' - nor on your thoughts and illusions, for sometimes a minor, venial sin can turn into a mortal one through negligence and contempt. I advise him, too, every Friday to do penance for his sins by making a humble confession to a priest with the purpose of amendment. Otherwise, his confession is worthless."

Again, the Mother of God added: "If the bishop sets out on this holy path, I warn him of three difficulties. The first is that it is a narrow path; the second, that it is thorny and sharp; the third, that it is uneven and rocky. I will give him three remedies for this. The first is for him to put on clothes. The second is to keep his ten fingers in front of his eyes and look through them as through bars so that the thorns do not easily or suddenly scratch his uncovered eyes. The third is that he should step cautiously and test each and every step he takes to see if his foot gets a firm hold, and he should not hastily set down both feet at the same time unless he has first assured himself of the path, whether it is slippery or level.

This narrow path symbolizes nothing other than the malice of wicked people and the hardships of the world that hinder and disturb the righteous on the path of righteousness. Against these things, the bishop should clothe himself in the garment of steadfast patience, for it is glorious to suffer insults on behalf of justice and truth. The ten fingers held before the eyes symbolize nothing other than the ten commandments. The righteous should reflect on them everyday so as to hold God's love in view whenever the thorns of insult make themselves felt. Whenever one feels the thorns of malice, one should react with love of neighbor. Whenever one feels drawn to worldly and carnal love, one should look to the scriptural injunction, 'You shall not covet,' and put a brake on concupiscence and live moderation.

Where charity is divine, patience is there in hardships, and joy in sickness, and sorrow over superfluity, fear of honor, humility in power, and the desire of withdrawing from the world. That the bishop should test each step to see if he has a firm foothold means that he should everywhere have an attitude of intelligent fear. A righteous person should have two feet. One foot is a longing for eternity. The other is a distaste for worldliness. His longing for eternity should be circumspect, in the sense that he must not long for eternal things for his own honor more than for God. His distaste for the world should be cautious, in the sense that it must not be the irrational result of impatience with life and his adverse fortune nor because of weariness in divine work. Caution is thus needed so that this distaste should only be the result of his longing for a better life and his abhorrence of sin.

Once the bishop has both these feet, fearful even that those faults he has corrected have not been fully corrected, and if he proceeds along this narrow and thorny path, then I would warn him about three enemies along the way. You see, the first enemy tries to whistle in his ears, while the second stands in front of him in order to scratch out his eyes, and the third enemy is at his feet, shouting loudly and holding a noose in order to ensnare the bishop's feet when he jumps up at his enemy's shout.

The first are those people or those diabolic impulses that make such suggestions to the bishop as these: 'Why are you making your way with such humility on so narrow a path? Why do you take so much work on yourself? Can it be that you want to be holier than other people so that you achieve what no one else has? Go off instead to the verdant path where many others are walking, so that you do not make a miserable failure of yourself. What does it matter to you whether people behave well or badly? What good does it do you to offend those people who could honor and appreciate you, if they do not offend you or yours? What concern is it of yours if they are offending God? It is better to exchange gifts! Make use of your position and of human friendships so as to win praise and to obtain heaven alike.' You see, this kind of enemy is whistling and has whistled in the ears of many persons. This is why many lamps that should be shining in the darkness have themselves become darkness, and much fine gold has been turned into mud.

The second enemy that tries to scratch out his eyes is worldly beauty and possessions, human privileges and favors. When such things are offered and desired, the eyes of the soul and of reason are blinded, because it seems more pleasant to stand around with Samson at the millstone of worldly care than to stay with the bridal church and be disposed for pastoral care. Moreover, even love for God, if there was any, grows lukewarm then, and sin is committed with confidence, and the committed offense is taken lightly because of this confidence in one's power. Therefore, when the bishop has what he needs for his household, the size of which is determined so as to maintain his honor and authority, he should be content. This agrees with the scriptural passage: 'Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with moderate possessions,' for no wholehearted soldier of God gets involved in worldly affairs, except only reluctantly and for the glory of God.

The third enemy carries a noose and shouts loudly as follows: 'Why do you humble yourself so much, you who could be honored above many people? Make an effort to go up to a higher position. Then you will have plenty and can give more away. Become a priest so that you may take your place among those of the first rank. Become a bishop and then an

archbishop or even higher, so that you may obtain more relaxation, better service, and greater privilege. Then you will be able to help others and be more respected by others and receive many people's encouragement.' When the heart is deceived by such suggestions, a foot is soon incautiously extended toward avarice, and one looks for a way to rise to a higher position. Then the heart becomes so entangled in the noose of worldly care that it can scarcely rise up. Nor is this surprising, since scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. And what is that noble task? It is to work for souls and for the glory of God, to work for an eternal reward and not a perishable one.

Now, instead, many desire the honors but not the work, and yet these are not an honor but an affliction. Where the burden of divine work is not found, there follows no honor for the soul in God's sight. This is why the bishop should not seek a higher rank other than the one he holds, for there is a noose lying hidden on the ground that is a trap for one who walks along the path. It is therefore beneficial to remain in his position, until either it pleases God to provide otherwise or an ecclesiastical superior decides something else for the glory of God. This has been said as advice and as a loving warning.

We will now explain what the bishop should do for God. He must hold his miter tightly in his arms. He must not sell it for money nor give it up to others for the sake of friendship nor lose it through negligence and lukewarmness. The bishop's crown or miter signifies nothing other than the bishop's power to ordain priests, to correct those who go astray, and to instruct the ignorant by his word and example. To hold his miter tightly in his arms means that the bishop should reflect carefully on how and why he received his episcopal power, how he wields it, and what its reward will be.

If the bishop would examine how he received his power, he should first examine whether he desired the episcopate for his own sake or for God's. If it was for his own sake, then he has reason to fear; if it was for God's sake, then his desire was meritorious and spiritual. If the bishop would consider for what purpose he has received his rank and power, let

me tell him. It was in order that he might become a consoler and liberator of souls by reason of his merit. He lives on almsgiving so that he might nourish the poor and be like a father for the rich, to assist God in spiritual errands and be zealous on behalf of God. If he wants to know the reward for his office, Paul says it well: He who has carried out his ministry well will be esteemed worthy of twofold honor. It is twofold in the sense of being both corporal and spiritual. Everyone who wears the episcopal garb but does not follow the episcopal way of life, who seeks the honor but neglects the work, will merit a double disgrace.

That the bishop's power is not to be sold means that the bishop should not knowingly commit simony nor tolerate it in others if he finds out about it, nor ordain or promote anyone for the sake of money and human favor, nor advance anyone whom he knows to be unworthy and of bad character because the worldly minded petition him to do so. That he should not give up his power to others on account of human friendship means that the bishop should not disguise the sins of the negligent out of false compassion, nor keep quiet out of friendship, nor, for any worldly reason, take on his own back the sins of others when he can, as he ought, correct them.

The bishop is God's sentinel. The blood of the dead is the sentinel's responsibility, if the sentinel saw the danger and did not cry out or if he fell asleep or did not care. That the bishop should not lose his crown or miter through negligence means that the bishop should not delegate to others what he should and can do himself. Nor should he, for the sake of his own lukewarm ease, transfer to others what he himself is better able to carry out. Nor should the bishop be ignorant of the life and conduct of those to whom he delegates his tasks. Instead, he should inquire both privately and openly about their conduct and their manner of observing justice, for the bishop's duty is not to rest but to work with solicitude.

In addition to taking good care of his miter as I have described, the bishop also ought to carry a bouquet of flowers under his arms in order to attract sheep far and near. A good shepherd entices his sheep to follow him by means of flowers and hay. This bouquet of flowers signifies the godly

preaching that pertains to a bishop. His two arms are two kinds of works, namely, good works in public for the sake of alluring others and good works in secret out of fear of God and as an example to one's neighbors. If his preaching is joined to these two good works, the bouquet of flowers will be most beautiful, and the nearby sheep in his diocese will gladly run after him. Likewise, the faraway sheep, hearing of his reputation, will want to get to know him, both because of his words and because of the charitable works that accompany them. These are the sweetest flowers for attracting sheep: doing deeds of virtue and teaching others, not with learned rhetoric but in few words full of charity. It is not right for a preacher of God to be mute nor for the sentinel of God's house to be blind.

The bishop still lacks one thing. When the bishop reaches the gate, he must present a gift to the high king. We advise him to present to the king a vessel that is dear to him, an empty and ornate vessel. The empty vessel to be presented is his own heart. May he offer it to God all adorned with virtue yet empty of self-will and carnal love. When this bishop reaches the gate, the shining host of heaven will come out to meet him. The true God and man will receive him, and the angels will then say: 'Lord God, this bishop was clean in body, pure in his priesthood, apostolic in his preaching, a bishop vigilant in his duties, manly in his conduct, humble in his office. Behold him whom we have longed to meet for his purity's sake, and so we present him to you, for he longed for you for the sake of your charity!'

Then all the saints in heaven will say: 'Lord our God! We have our joy in you. Yet, our joy is heightened by this bishop. He carried flowers on his lips and used them to call out to many sheep. He carried flowers in his hands to give refreshment to the sheep that came to him. He sent flowers to those that lived afar and so roused sheep who were sleeping. Thus, because the flowers of his words increased our chorus, we rejoice over him. Rejoice with us, Lord God, over this man and his honor, for he longed for you above all things.'

Then the Lord, the giver of glory, shall say to him: 'Friend, you came to present to me the vessel of your heart emptied of yourself, and you

longed to be filled with me. Therefore, come, I will fill you with myself. Be in me and I shall be in you. Your glory and happiness will have no end.'

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The Virgin Mary tells the bride while she is praying for a hermit, a friend of hers, who had died, that, before his body is buried beneath the earth, his soul will be brought into heaven.

Chapter 127

While the bride was praying for an old priest, a friend of hers, who had been a most excellent and virtuous hermit but who had already departed from this life and lay now in an open coffin in the church before being buried, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said: "Listen, my daughter, and know that the soul of this hermit and friend of yours would have entered into heaven as soon as his soul had left the body, if he had possessed a perfect desire at his death of coming into the presence and sight of God. As it is, he will now be held in the purgatory of longing, where there is no pain other than the sole longing of coming to God. Know, too, that, before his body enters the earth, his soul will be brought into glory."

EXPLANATION

"Tell that aged monk: For a long time you remained in the desert and bore fruit that pleased me, turning wild beasts into sheep and lions into lambs. Remain now steadfast in the city whose streets are strewn with the blood of saints, for you shall be heard at the court of judgment and behold your retribution."

Immediately after hearing this, he fell sick and went to his rest in peace not long after.

This Benedictine monk had asked Lady Bridget to inquire of God how he could be certain about which habit to wear, since he was much troubled concerning the many abuses of the religious habit in the order of St.

Benedict. So, when the lady was caught up in the Spirit, the Son of God said to her: "I told you earlier (in Book 3 Chapters 20 and 22) that my servant Benedict regarded his body as a sack.

He had five garments. The first was a rough shirt with which he tamed the flesh and its disorderly impulses in order that they might not run riot and exceed their bounds. The second garment was a simple cowl, neither elaborate nor full of folds, which was to cover, adorn, and warm the flesh, so as not to scare anyone seeing him. The third was a scapular by which he would be found more prompt and ready for manual labor. The fourth garment was protective covering for the feet so that he might be more agile and humble in walking the path of God. The fifth was the belt of humility, girded with which he would cut down on superfluous items and carry out more expeditiously the customary work enjoined upon him.

Nowadays, however, his monks want luxurious clothes and abhor asperity. They want garments that please others and that excite carnal thoughts. Instead of a cowl, they put on a cape that has so many folds and is so wide and long that they seem more like conceited show-offs than humble religious. Instead of a scapular, they have a small cloth in the back and front, and they cover their heads with a hood after worldly fashion in order to be like people in the world. And yet they are neither like people in the world nor do they work together with God's humble servants. They cover their feet and put on a belt as though they were ready for a wedding, not for running in the stadium of toil.

A monk who wants to be saved must, therefore, observe that my Benedict's rule allows him to have a moderate amount of necessities, useful, not superfluous items, honest and suitable possessions, all of it in humility and not in pride. What does the cowl symbolize if not being more humble than others? What does the cowl's poor hood symbolize if not the rejection of worldly ways? Why are the monks adopting a fashionable hood, unless because they are ashamed of humble ways and so that they can be like people living in the world? What decoration or usefulness is there in a hood with a tail if not mere ostentation and fastidiousness that go against the beautiful rule of their religious order? What more does a plaited

cape do than a cowl, except to make a wandering friar seem grander and more stylish to others? However, if a humble and plain cape were worn for some needful and adequate reason, it would not be improper, though a humble cowl would be more suitable so that the religious order in which a monk has made his profession could be recognized from his habit. However, if the monk has a headache or suffers from the cold, he does not sin if he wears a suitable and humble covering beneath the hood of his cowl - not on the outside, for that would be proof of frivolity and vanity."

The lady answered: "My Lord, do not be angry with me if I ask something. Do the monks sin when they wear such a habit by permission of their superiors or because of a custom established by their predecessors?" God said to her: "An exemption is valid if it proceeds from an upright intention. Some grant exemptions out of zeal for justice, others out of false compassion and unwise permissiveness, and others, again, out of their own moral frivolity and obsequiousness. Others feign justice, being empty of divine charity. However, an exemption is pleasing to me if it is not opposed to humility, and the permission is valid only when it prudently allows for necessities but condemns superfluities even in small things."

The lady asked again: "Lord, my God, what if some of them do not know what is better or more suitable according to the rule? Do they sin as well?" Christ answered: "How can a professed member of a religious order not know the rule that is read and heard every day? It is laid down in the rule that a monk should be humble and obedient and wear a habit made from rough rather than softer materials, an exemplary kind of habit and not a pompous one. Who is so obtuse of conscience that he does not understand that he has taken vows of humility and total poverty? The true Benedictine is one who obeys the rule rather than his flesh, who does not want to please anyone but God in his habit or customs, who daily longs to die and prepares himself for his exit from this world, and who is concerned about the account he must render concerning the rule of Benedict."

The Virgin Mother's answer to the question of her Son's bride who was praying for a certain monk in a position of doubt as to whether it would be more acceptable to God for him to enjoy the sweetness of mental consolation by never leaving his place of hermitage, or to come down from time to time in order to instruct the souls of his neighbors.

Chapter 128

The Mother speaks: "Speak to that priest and hermit who is my friend, the one who, against his own desires and the peace of his own soul, moved by faith and devotion to his neighbor, leaving his solitary cell and quiet contemplation behind, from time to time comes down from his place of hermitage in order to be with people and give them spiritual counsels, whose example and saving counsel bring about the conversion of many souls and the advancement in virtue of the already converted. He requested your advice with humility, humble about doubts caused by the cunning and fraudulent tricks of the devil. He asked you to pray for him in regard to the matter of whether it would please God more for him to enjoy the sweetness of his contemplation alone or whether such charitable work on behalf of his neighbors would be more acceptable to God.

Tell him, then, from me that it is altogether more pleasing to God, as has been said, that he should sometimes come down from his place of hermitage and go to carry out such works of charity among his neighbors, sharing with them the virtues and graces that he receives from God, in order that by this work they might be converted and attach themselves with greater fervor to God and become sharers in his glory, than that he should enjoy spiritual consolation alone in his solitary cell in the hermitage.

Tell him, too, that he will earn a greater reward in heaven for such charitable work, provided that he always carries it out in accordance with the advice and permission of a senior spiritual father. Tell him, again, that I want him to receive as spiritual children to be directed under his guidance all those hermits, including nuns and female recluses, who were once the spiritual children of my other friend, the hermit who has died. He should direct them all with loving guidance in a spiritual and virtuous manner, just

as that man guided and directed them when he was alive, for it pleases God to have it so.

If they accept him as their father and obey him humbly according to the spiritual life of a hermit, he will be a father for them and I will be for them a Mother. If, however, anyone of them does not want to accept or obey him as a spiritual father, then it will be better for one not practicing obedience to leave them immediately than to remain any longer with them. My friend, then, may go to them and return to his cell as often as it seems good to him, but always with the advice and permission of his senior.”

Two years after the bride had the vision about the beast and the fish contained in Book 4 Chapter 2 above, Christ appeared to her and gave a most clear and notable explanation of the very obscure vision: The beast and fish stand for sinners and heathen; those that catch it, for righteous and virtuous people.

Chapter 129

The Son speaks to the bride: ”I told you earlier that I desire the heart of the animal and the blood of the fish. The heart of this animal stands for nothing other than the beloved and immortal souls of Christians, which appeal to me more than anything else that seems desirable in the world. The blood of the fish is nothing other than perfect love for God. The heart should be presented to me with the pure hands, and the blood in an ornate glass vessel, for purity is pleasing to God and to angels. Purity is most fitting for every spiritual work, like a jewel on a ring. The love for God should be presented in an ornamented vessel, because the heathen soul should shine like a glass vessel and burn with an ardent love for God, a love that unites faithful and infidel as in a single body with its head, that is, with God.

The heart of a Christian hardened in sin is like an animal without the hardness of obedience that runs about in vices and lives by its pleasures. Those who want to present me with the heart of such a one should make a hole in their hands with a sharp bore, for then neither swords nor arrows

will prevail against them. The hands of the righteous are nothing other than their actions, both physical and spiritual. The physical hand, that is, working and sustaining the body, is necessary indeed. The spiritual hand is fasting and praying and the like. In order, therefore, for human activity to be sober and wise, one must bore through it with the fear of God.

A person must recall at all times that God is always present. He should also be afraid of losing the grace given to him, for no one can accomplish anything without God's help, yet one can do all things with God's love. Just as a drill prepares the holes in which something is to be placed, so too fear of God solidifies all one's actions and both prepares the way for divine love and attracts God's help. One must therefore be fearful and prudent in all one's actions, for, although both spiritual and physical work are necessary, yet without fear and prudence, work is not useful. Imprudence and presumption ruin and confuse everything and take away the goodness of perseverance. Accordingly, a person who wants to overcome the hardness of the animal should be unbending in acts of prudence and constant in godly fear and in the hope of divine aid, making as great an effort as possible. God will then offer his assistance and break through that hardened heart.

My friend should also use strong pitch to fortify his own eyes with the eyelids of a whale so as not to be killed at the sight of the basilisk. What are the eyes of the righteous man if not a twofold consideration he should make each day, namely, the consideration of God's blessings and self-examination? In thinking of God's mercy and blessings, he should examine his own usefulness and his ingratitude toward God's blessings. When he feels at heart that he deserves to be condemned, he should fortify his eyes with the consideration symbolized by the eyelid of the whale, that is, with hope and faith in God's goodness, so as not to grow soft in considering God's mercy nor despair in considering his judgment. In the same way as the eyelids of a whale are neither soft like flesh nor hard like bone, so too a person must be balanced between God's mercy and his judgment, steadfastly hoping for mercy and prudently fearing his judgment. He should rejoice in God's mercy and advance from virtue to virtue because of

God's justice. Hence, those people who stay between mercy and justice each day, in hope and in fear, have no reason to fear the eyes of the animal.

What do the eyes of the animal symbolize if not worldly wisdom and temporal prosperity? Worldly wisdom, which is here compared to the animal's first eye, is like the sight of the basilisk: It hopes for what it sees and is promptly rewarded, for it desires things that will perish. Divine wisdom, on the other hand, hopes for that which is unseen; it pays no attention to worldly prosperity but loves humility and patience; it seeks only an eternal reward. The animal's second eye is worldly prosperity that is sought after by bad people who forget the things of heaven while they pursue it, becoming thus hardened against God.

Everyone desirous of his neighbor's salvation should with prudence connect his eyes to the eyes of the animal, that is, of his neighbor, by proposing to him God's blessed mercy and his judgment, withstanding worldly words with the words of God's wisdom, displaying a life of persevering continence to incontinent people, eschewing the riches and honors of the present life for the sake of divine charity, preaching firmly and putting the preaching into practice, for a spiritual life gives proof of one's words, and holy example accomplishes more than can wordy eloquence without efficacious deeds.

Those who keep God's blessings and judgment always in mind are those who have God's words continually on their lips and put them into practice and place their hope firmly in God's goodness, who are not harmed by the sting of the swords of their enemies, that is, by the treacherous devices of worldly people, but, rather, make progress and for charity's sake convert the erring to God's true charity. Those, however, that grow proud of the grace given them and seek profit from their eloquence are dead, though they live.

A plate of steel should be tied to one's heart in the sense that one should always keep God's love in sight through thinking about how God humbled himself by becoming man, how he endured hunger and thirst and toil during his preaching, how he hung upon the cross and rose again after

his death and ascended into heaven. This steel plate of love gets length and width when the mind is ready to endure freely any sufferings that come, when one does not grumble about God's decisions nor become upset about hardships but, instead, puts one's whole mind and body into God's mind and plan. O, daughter, I was like the strongest steel when I was stretched out upon the cross, praying for my enemies, practically oblivious of my own suffering and wounds.

You have to close your nostrils and run toward the beast with your mouth shut because, just as breath enters and exits through the nostrils, so too life and death enter into the soul through a person's desires. Therefore, you must guard yourself against desire as against death, so that they do not enter into your soul or, having entered, remain there. Anyone who proposes to take on arduous tasks ought to examine his temptations and be on guard against any lack of divine zeal due to inordinate desires. Accordingly, you must run toward the sinner with all your desire, with divine zeal and complete patience, both in season and out of season, so that the sinner may be converted. Where the righteous man makes no progress through speech or admonishments, there he must exercise zeal and persevere in earnest prayer.

The animal should be grasped on top with both your hands. Now, it has two ears: one ear to hear the pleasant things it likes; another, which it blocks up, so as not to hear anything profitable to its soul. It is useful for the friend of God to have two spiritual hands, just as before he had physical hands. However, he should have holes in them. One hand is the divine wisdom with which he shows to the sinner that all the things of this world are fleeting and slippery, that one who delights in them is deceived and unsafe, for they were all given for one's needs and not for excess. The other hand is good example and good action, for the good person ought to do as he teaches in order to strengthen his listeners by his example. Many teach but without setting an example. They are the ones who, in the coldness of their minds, build up a stone structure without using cement so that it quickly falls apart when the storm dashes upon it.

The animal's hide is like flint and must be assailed with hammer and fire. The hide denotes the show and simulation of justice. Wicked people, who do not want to be good, do desire to seem to be what they are not. Because they want to be called praiseworthy but not to live in a praiseworthy way, they make an outward show of holiness and feign justice, although they never give justice a thought. This is how they become so proud and hard as flint in their appearance of simulated holiness that they are not softened by rebukes or clear reasoning.

Accordingly, God's servant must use the hammer of harsh rebuke and the fire of divine prayer on such as these in order to convince the wicked with the word of truth and gradually soften them up from their hardness and warm them through their prayers and enkindle them with respect to knowledge of God and of themselves, just as Stephen did. He did not speak pleasing words but true ones, not soft words but hard ones. Moreover, he prayed to God for them, and this is why he achieved what he did, and many persons improved because of him. Thus, whoever perforates the work of his hands with the fear of God and protects the eyes of contemplation with temperance and covers his heart with a plate of steel, closing his nostrils, and in this way presents the animal's heart to me, then I, God, shall give to him a most delightful treasure. The eye does not grow weary of its delight, nor does the ear tire of its pleasure, nor can one get enough of tasting its enjoyment, nor is any pain ever felt at its touch. No, rather, the soul enjoys happiness and everlasting plenty.

The fish symbolizes the heathen whose scales are very powerful, being hardened by sin and malice. Just as closely packed scales are a defense and prevent the wind from getting in, so too the heathen, glorying in their sins and living on false hopes, protect themselves with defenses against my friends. They prefer their own cults, multiply terrors, threaten punishments. So, anyone who wants to present me with the fish's blood should cast the net of preaching over it, not the kind consisting in the rotten strings of elaborately eloquent philosophers and orators, but in simplicity of speech and in humble deeds. The simple preaching of God's word is as sonorous as bronze in God's sight and powerfully attracts

sinner to God. My church began and developed not through eloquent teachers but through humble and ordinary people.

The preacher should be careful not to enter the water above his knees or to step anywhere where the sand is not solid, so that he does not lose his footing if the waves rise above his knees. What is the present life if not, as it were, water in constant and unstable motion? In such water, one must not bend down on the knee of spiritual fortitude except only when necessary. One should set the foot of human affection on solid sand, that is, on the solidity of divine charity and the contemplation of the life to come. Those people who stretch out the feet of their affections and use their fortitude for temporal ends are not steadfast in winning souls but sink beneath the waves of temporal cares.

The righteous man should also pluck out his eye and turn it toward the fish, for the eye is twofold, human and spiritual. The human eye instills fear when it sees the power and cruelty of tyrants but when the spirit, considering its own weakness, is afraid to speak out. This eye of fear should be put out and plucked away from the soul through the contemplation of divine goodness, by considering and firmly believing that every person, who puts his or her trust in God and seeks to win over a sinner for the sake of God, shall have God himself as a protector. The sinner, or any convert to God, should be examined with the spiritual eye of insight with careful attention as to how he might be tempted and how he stands up in tribulations, so that he does not become overwhelmed by the exertion of adopting unaccustomed exercises, and so that tribulation does not make him regret having adopted a more austere way of life.

The righteous person, whoever he or she may be, should also consider the material sustenance of the infidels converted to the faith so that they do not have to beg or be oppressed in slavery or be deprived of their corresponding rights. He should also take diligent care that such a convert should be continually instructed in the holy Catholic faith and in holy examples of virtue. It is indeed pleasing to me that pagan converts should see habits of holiness and hear words of charity. Many Christians come to the pagans undisciplined and in a state of moral disorder, boasting that

they kill the pagans' bodies and gain their temporal possessions. This pleases me about as much as those who sacrificed to the molten calf in the desert. Therefore, anyone who desires to please me by going to the pagans, let him first pluck out his eye of avarice and worldly fear. But he should keep his eye of compassion open along with his understanding so as to win their souls, desiring nothing but to die for God's sake and to live for God.

The righteous man should, moreover, have a shield of steel, that is, true patience and perseverance, in order not to be separated from God's love by either words or deeds nor, worn out due to various mishaps, complain in any way about God's decisions. As a shield both protects and takes the striking blows, so too true patience is a defense in temptations. It also makes hardship easier and outfits people for every good deed. The shield of patience should not be formed out of fragile materials but out of the strongest bronze. True patience must obviously be formed and tested by contemplating my own patience. I was like the strongest steel when I preferred to suffer death rather than to lose souls and preferred to hear insults rather than to come down from the cross. Hence, anyone who desires patience must imitate my constancy. For, if I, who was innocent suffered, what wonder is it that a person who deserves his sentence should suffer?

A person thus fortified with patience should spread out his net over the fish and hold it for ten hours above the waters. Then he shall get the blood of the fish. These ten hours represent nothing other than ten counsels that should be given to the convert. The first is to believe in the ten commandments that I gave to the people of Israel. The second is to receive and venerate the sacraments of my church. The third is to feel sorrow for past sins and to have the perfect intention of no longer committing them. The fourth is to obey my friends as often as they tell the convert to do something that goes against his own will.

The fifth is to despise all his base habits that go against God and good morals. The sixth is to have the desire of bringing as many people as possible to God. The seventh is to display true humility in his actions, avoiding giving bad example. The eighth is to have patience in adversity

and not to complain about God's decisions. The ninth is not to listen to or keep company with those who set themselves against the holy Christian faith. The tenth is to ask God for the strength to persevere in love and to make a personal effort to do so. Anyone converted from evil ways who observes and keeps these ten counsels will die away from love of the world and become alive to the love of God.

When the fish, that is, the sinner rescued from the waters of lustful pleasure, resolves to keep these ten counsels, he should be opened at his backbone where the blood is most plentiful. What does the backbone symbolize if not upright actions and a good intention? His will should incline to God's pleasure. Oftentimes, indeed, an action seems good in the sight of men but the agent's intention and will are not good. Thus, the just man, who seeks to convert a sinner, should examine the other's intention in undertaking a good work as well as the intention with which he aims to persevere in it. If he should discover some carnal affection in a spiritual work, whether toward relatives or with a regard to acquiring temporal gains, then he should hasten to cut it out of his heart. Just as bad blood brings on disease, obstructs movement, tightens the access to the heart, and impairs one's appetite for food, so too a bad will and a corrupt intention destroy love for God, provoke spiritual torpor, close the heart toward God, and make every spiritual good abhorrent to him.

However, the blood that I desire is fresh blood that gives life to the limbs. This means: a good intention and love directed toward God. This prepares the way for the faith, equips the senses for understanding and the limbs for action, and attracts the help of God. This intention is preceded and infused by my grace. It is increased through prayers and through own goodness. It is perfected through good actions and through delight in me.

That is how the blood of the fish should be presented to me. Anyone who presents it to me in this way shall have the best of rewards. A river of every delight will flow into his mouth, perpetual splendor will light up his soul, and his salvation will be renewed without end.”

ADDITION

Note that Christ begins to speak of the fish and the animal in Book 4 Chapter 2 of the Revelations and explains what they mean in this chapter 129.

ADDITION

The following revelation was made in Amalfi where St. Matthew lies buried. "Blessed are you, holy apostle Matthew! You were the best of money-changers. That is to say, you exchanged something earthly and found something eternal. You scorned yourself and obtained God. You put away false prudence, despised physical rest, and took up hard labor. This is why you are now deservingly glorified in God's sight."

St. Matthew answered: "Blessed be God who inspired this greeting in you! Indeed, so please God, I want to show you what kind of man I was when I wrote the Gospel and what state of reward I find myself in now. I did indeed hold a public office, which I could not carry out without a public income. However, my intention at the time was such that I did not want to defraud anyone. Rather, I longed to find a way to separate myself from that office and devote myself wholeheartedly to God alone. At the preaching of my lover, Jesus Christ, his calling to me burned like fire in my heart. His words were so sweet to me that I could no more think of wealth and honor than of chaff. No, indeed, I wanted to weep and to rejoice, because my God wished to call so insignificant and so great a sinner to his grace. As I clung to my Lord, I began to fix his words in my heart ever more ardently and meditate on them, savoring them night and day like the most delicious food.

When my Lord's passion was accomplished, I wrote the Gospel according to what I had seen and heard and experienced - not for my own fame but for the glory of my Redeemer and for the good of souls. While I was writing it, such a fire of divine flame continued burning in me that, even had I wanted to keep silent, I would have been completely unable because of its intensity. Now, however, many are trying to subvert and maliciously interpret what I wrote out of love and humility. They boast

about having lofty, celestial knowledge whenever they encounter discrepancies. They prefer to argue about the Gospel rather than live according to its meaning.

The humble and lowly shall therefore enter into heaven, while the proud and clever remain outside. Why do the proud and presumptuous think that the God of such great wisdom was unable so to arrange his words that people would not be scandalized at them? Yet it is only just that scandals come, and that those who feel an aversion for heavenly things should become attached to earthly things. However, with regard to my reward, rest assured that what scripture says is true: The heart cannot conceive it nor the tongue describe it.”

Many years after the bride had the vision about the seven animals in this same book (Chapter 125), Christ explained certain things that were missing in the explanation of that vision, as follows.

Chapter 130

The Son speaks: ”I told you earlier about seven animals, one of which was like an elephant that leaned against a tree without noticing the tree's fragility nor the brevity of time, which is why it fell down along with the tree precisely when it thought it could remain standing. The walls of his church were to be so ruined by heat and water that there would be no one to rebuild them, because they had been built out of wicked people. The ground was to be torn asunder, and those that dwell there would seek death, but it would evade them, and the ungodly would rule over the righteous. All this has come to pass.

Know, too, that the second animal, which was proud of the jewel of its chastity, has now assumed the horns of a lamb. I shall therefore teach him how he must leap over the walls and continue in his honorable state. The humility of this animal pleases me, and therefore I say to him that his church has already risen to its highest position and has long been in a state

of pride. Accordingly, this man should strive to make the clergy live more continent lives, reduce their lack of moderation in drink, put off greed, and put on humility and fear. Otherwise, they will be felled by hardships, and their fall will be so heavy and so great that people in other countries will hear of it.”

After the death of the bishop mentioned and the creation of his successor, the Lord spoke to me, saying: ”Know that this bishop (the successor of the aforesaid bishop) who has now risen to episcopal rank was one of the five servants whom the king would not heed, unless they acquired clearer eyesight. This bishop has now ascended, but let him make a good examination, and he shall see how he has ascended with respect to my judgment. I warn him of the fate of Joab. Joab felt envy toward his betters and relied on his own counsels. He had great audacity and, hence, was presumptuous beyond his capacity. He preferred his own chosen one to the one God had chosen. One piece of advice, however, is useful to a bishop. He should put a check on his own prudence and always pay attention not to what is possible but to what is honorable.”

When he was in doubt as to whether or not it would be good for him to go to Rome for the remission of his sins, he sought my advice. When I was praying, the Mother of God answered in this way: ”If this bishop feels in his soul that he needs the help of the saints, let him come to Rome for the indulgences, for there will come a time when it will be good for him. Let him also attend to cutting back the claws of the rapacious birds that have already entered so that they do not settle down on the highest cliffs, because they will hurt the common folk more then, and he himself will not be immune from hardship.

Know, furthermore, that the animal that, as I told you, feels fear at seeing its own shadow and benefits itself by running, is the one who has zeal for souls and does not become dejected at heart by derogatory words spoken to him, nor elated over words of assent and adulation. He is prepared to leave the world by dying and is also prepared to go on living for the sake of my glory, if it should so please me. Therefore, I shall run out to meet him halfway, like a father with his son, and I shall take him out

of custody, like a merciful judge, so that he does not have to see the evils to come. However, the one who continued in his leprosy will die along with those who have their bellies full. He will be buried and sentenced along with the lepers, and he will not be seated among those who will judge the world.”

This is the end of the fourth book according to Alfonso.

A revelation given on Monte Gargano concerning the excellence of the angels.

Chapter 131

Lady Bridget saw a multitude of angels singing praises on Monte Gargano and saying: "Blessed are you, our God, who are and shall be and ever were without beginning or end! You created us spirits to minister to you and to comfort and protect humankind, We are sent to them for their benefit and yet are never deprived of the sweet consolation of the beatific vision. Because we were as though unknown to humankind, you wished on this spot to reveal this your blessing and the dignity given to us, in order that people might learn both to love you and to desire our help. This place, which long was held in honor by many, is now neglected, The inhabitants of the land turn more to unclean spirits than to us, inasmuch as they follow their suggestions more eagerly."

The lady answered: "My Lord, my Creator and Redeemer, help them to cease from sinning and to desire you with all their heart!" God said to her: "They have grown accustomed to filth, and will not learn except by force. Would that they would get to know themselves through discipline and recover their senses again!"

Christ speaks about the five good gifts given to priests and their five opposites that bad priests do.

Chapter 132

“I am like a man about to depart from this world who entrusts his greatest possessions to his dearest friends. When I was about to depart from this world, I accordingly entrusted the thing dearest to me, my own body, to priests whom I chose to be above all the angels and above all other men. I gave to them these five good gifts: first, my faith; second, the two keys to hell and heaven; third, the ability to make an angel out of an enemy; fourth, the ability to consecrate my body, which none of the angels can do; fifth, the gift of handling my most pure body with their own hands. Now, however, they treat me just as the Jews did who denied that I had raised Lazarus and performed other miracles, who instead spread the rumor that I wanted to be made king, that I had prohibited paying the tribute tax, and that I would rebuild the temple in three days.

In similar fashion, priests do not speak of my miracles or teach my doctrine but teach rather the love of the world. They preach their own pleasure and think nothing of what I did for them. Second, they have lost the key with which they were to open heaven for the wretched. They love, however, the key that opens hell and keep it wrapped away in fine clean linen. Third, they make a wicked man out of a righteous one, a devil out of the simple-hearted, a wounded man out of a healthy one - anyone who turns to them with three wounds receives a fourth from them. If someone comes to them with four wounds, then he leaves them with five. Once a sinner has seen the immoral example of priests, he grows confident in sinning and begins to boast of the sin that he earlier considered shameful. This is why their condemnation will be greater than that of others, because they go astray in their conduct and hurt others by their example.

Fourth, they sell me, though they should be sanctifying me with their lips. They are worse than Judas. At least Judas recognized his sin and experienced remorse, however unprofitably. These, however, call themselves just and make a show of it. Judas returned the price for his services to the buyers. These, instead, keep it for their own use. Judas sold me prior to the world's redemption. These sell me after I have already redeemed the world. They feel no compassion about the blood I lost,

which cries out for vengeance more than the blood of Abel. Judas sold me for money alone. These, however, sell me for any kind of merchandise, since they do not approach me unless they hope to gain something for themselves. Fifth, they treat me like the Jews. What did the Jews do? They put me on the wood of the cross, but these put me in an oil-press and press down hard upon it.

You might ask: How does this happen, given that my divine nature is impassible as well as my human nature? I will tell you. My divine and human natures are impassible, nor can sorrow or adversity affect God. However, the intention of these priests to remain in sin is so adverse and bitter to me that it is as if I were placed in an oil-press, if that were possible. These priests have two sins, namely, lust and greed, and they press me between the two.

They may, perhaps, do penance for these sins, but, then, after having carried out their priestly office, they have the firm intention to sin again, and so it is as though they press down hard upon me in an oil-press. Of course, they provide for women of ill repute and put them in a safe place so they can fulfill their lust and cast me out. They fawn on them and delight in them, but have no desire to see me who am the cause of their existence.

See, my friends, what sort of priests they are! See, my angels, the ones whom you serve! If I lay before you as I lie on the altar before them, none of you would dare to touch me. You would be afraid to do so. These men, however, betray me like thieves and traitors. Like whores they touch me. They are filthier than tar, yet they do not feel ashamed to approach me, who am the God and Lord of glory. Accordingly, as it was said to Israel, 'seven plagues shall come upon you.' Those seven plagues shall surely come upon the priests!"

Christ compares himself to Moses leading Israel through the Red Sea where the waters stood like walls to right and left, and about how Israel, that is, bad priests, neglect Christ and select the golden calf, that is, the world, and about how Christ

honored priests by means of seven orders, from which they have turned away in seven ways.

Chapter 133

The Mother spoke: "The enemies of my Son were so eager for his blood that they even inflicted wounds on him when he was dead. Get yourself ready, for my Son is coming with his great host to speak to you!" Then he himself came and said: "Earlier, I likened myself to Moses when he was leading the people, when the water stood like a wall to right and left. I am indeed like Moses, figuratively speaking. I led the Christian people, that is, I opened heaven up for them and showed them the way to walk, freeing them from their oppressor, the devil, as though from pharaoh.

They walked, as it were, between the two walls of the sea to right and left. One of these walls no longer was not meant to proceed; the other of them was not meant to recede; yet both were to stand firmly. These two walls were the two covenants. The first was the old law, the one not meant to proceed. The second was the new law, the one that was not to recede. Between these two, firmly standing walls, I went to the cross as though through the Red Sea, for my whole body was made red with my blood, and red was the once white wood, red the lance. I redeemed my captive people in order to win their love.

Now, however, Israel, that is, the priests, neglect me, and they select another god to love. In their passion for the world, as I said before, they love the golden calf. It becomes desirable to them because of their lust and burns in them because of their passions, standing strong on its feet with its head and throat of gluttony. Besides that, they treat me like an idol and lock me in so that I cannot go. They offer incense to me, yet do not please me by it, because they are not doing it for my sake but for themselves. They bend their knee of voluntary obedience to me only as it suits their desires, in order that I may buy them some temporal gain. They call out to

me, but my ears do not hear them, because it is not from devotion, and they do not really mean it.

Hear me, my heavenly host and all my angels! I chose priests in preference to all the angels and other righteous people. To them alone I gave the power of handling my body. If I had liked, I could have chosen an angel for such an office. Instead, I had so much love for my priests that I granted them this great honor, and I appointed them to stand before me in as it were in seven ranks. They should be as patient as sheep, as steadfast as a solidly based wall, as courageous as soldiers, as wise as serpents, as modest as a virgin, as pure as an angel, as burning with longing as a bride for the marriage bed of her groom.

Now, however, they have turned from me in the worst way. They are as wild as predatory wolves that yield to none in their hunger and covetousness, that give honor to none, that have no shame. Second, they are as unsteady as a stone in a weak wall. They lack confidence in their base, that is, in God, in his ability to give them what they need and in his desire to sustain them. Third, like thieves walking in the dark, they find themselves in the darkness of vice. They do not have the daring of soldiers to fight for the glory of God or to undertake a manly task. Fourth, they stand about like asses with their heads to the ground, so stupid and foolish, always thinking about earthly and present conditions and never about what is to come. Fifth, they are as immodest as whores and approach me dressed like whores, keeping their bodies for lustful indulgence. Sixth, they are hideously stained with tar; everyone who comes close to them gets dirty. Seventh, they are as disgusting as vomit. It would be milder and better for me to approach vomit than to spend my pleasure with them. They are so disgusting that the whole heavenly host is disgusted with them. What would be more repulsive than a naked man bringing his mouth down to his lower limbs and eating his own excrement and drinking his own urine? That is how repulsive they are in my sight.

When they clothe themselves in priestly vestments, which can be compared to the clothing of the soul, for those vestments denote how the soul should be, then they clothe themselves as genuine traitors. When a

man who has given his pledge to the enemy of his lord has to fight together with his lord against that enemy, he blunts his weapons so as not to injure him. In the same way, when these men clothe themselves in priestly vestments, which are the clothing of the soul, figuratively speaking, with which they should protect themselves against the devil, they keep everything blunted so as not to injure the devil and so that he need not fear them.

One might ask: How does that happen? Well, when they clothe themselves with the weapons of continence, they blunt them through lust and thus do not vex the devil. When they clothe themselves with the weapons of charity, the weapons do no harm, because they have been blunted through malice. The weapons, that is, the vestments, in which they clothe themselves, are not for their Lord's protection but are only for show, just like traitors who act in one way but put on a different appearance.

O my friends, thus do these accursed, dissembling priests approach me like traitors. Yet I come to them all the same, I who am your God and the God of every creature in heaven and on earth, and I lie there before them on the altar, true God and true man. As soon as they have pronounced those words 'This is my body,' I come to them like a bridegroom to share the delight of my divine nature with them, but I encounter the devil in them. So when they put me to their mouths, I take my divine and human natures and go away, and the devil, who had fled in terror at the presence of the Lord, returns then with pleasure.

Hear again, my friends, what dignity I conferred upon priests, beyond that of the angels and other men. I gave them five privileges. First, the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth. Second, I gave them the ability to turn my worst enemy into a friend, a devil into an angel of mine. Third, I gave them the power of preaching my words. Fourth, the power of consecrating and offering my body, something that none of the angels can do. Fifth, the privilege of handling my body, something that none of you would dare to do, if I were lying before you.

I make five accusations against them now. First, that they open hell and close heaven to those trying to enter. Second, that they make an enemy out of a friend and deal two wounds to the person coming to them with only one, who sees the shameful life of priests and thinks to himself: 'If he can do it, even more so can I.' Third, they make nothing of my words and assert their own lies while denying my truth. Fourth, they sell me with their lips, though they should be sanctifying me. Fifth, they crucify my body more painfully than the Jews did.

My friends, see how those whom I have chosen and loved so much repay me. I joined them to myself with my own body, and they dissolve the bond between us. This is why they shall be sentenced as traitors and not as priests, unless they reform themselves.”

Christ says that he has given more honor to priests than to all the angels and other men, but that they provoke him more than all the others. Their damnation is illustrated in the soul of one priest eternally damned.

Chapter 134

Mary said: "Remember my Son's passion! He is coming now." And there appeared St. John the Baptist who said to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "God's anger at the world has not been so great for a thousand years." When the Son came, he said to the bride: "To me it is but an hour from the beginning, and how much time is that to you? All this time is to me but as a single hour. Regarding priests, I told you before that I chose them from among all angels and men, yet now they are more vexing to me than any others." Then there appeared demons carrying a soul in their hands. They said to the Judge: "Behold the warrior!" The Judge answered: "Though corporal beings cannot hear things of the spirit nor can the corporal eye see spiritual beings, yet for the sake of this woman standing here, the eyes of whose understanding I am opening, tell us, by what right do you own this soul?"

They answered: "We possess him by nine rights or, rather, transgressions. First, he was beneath us in three ways, equal to us in three ways, above us in three ways. Our first right to him lies in the fact that he was good on the outside but bad within. The second is that he was at times full of covetousness and gluttony but at other times fasted only for the good of the body or because of illness. Third, at times he was severe in word and deed, but at other times his wicked severity was suppressed for the sake of some advantage to himself. We do not have these defects, for we are on the outside just what we are within, and we are always wickedly severe and always equally covetous of evil.

He was our peer in three ways, inasmuch as we fell through the three sins of pride, covetousness, and envy, and he has these three himself. He was above and surpassed us in wickedness in three ways, as being a priest who handled your body. The first was that he did not guard his mouth with which he was to proclaim your words. Instead, like a barking dog, he barked out your words. When he proclaimed your words, we felt the same kind of fear as someone hearing some terrible sound, and we fled from him in terror at once. However, he stayed on without any fear or shame. Second, he did not guard his hands with which he handled your most pure body, but stained them in every kind of pleasure. Whenever he handled your body, which was the same body as that in the Virgin's womb and on the cross, after the words of consecration had been spoken, then we felt the same kind of fear as a man whose whole body is convulsed with fear, though our motive was not divine charity but fear at your power and your great might. He, however, stood there unafraid and did not care. When he put you to his mouth, which was like a filthy dirty vessel, we were like men who had lost all their might, like one lacking all strength, dead from fear even though we are immortal. Yet he felt no fear and did not tremble to touch you. However, since it was not fitting that the Lord of majesty should enter into so shameful a vessel, you would take your divine and human natures and leave him, and he would remain alone, and we, who fled in fear each and every time, would return to him in a fury.

In all these ways he excelled us in evil, and this is why we rightfully own him. Therefore, since you are the just Judge, render judgment for us

concerning him.” The Judge answered: ”I hear your demands, but you, wretched soul, while this woman is present, tell us what intention you had at the end of your life, while you still had the use of reason and bodily strength.”

The soul answered: ”My intention was to sin unceasingly and never desist. However, because I knew that I would not live forever, I decided to sin up until the very last moment and that was my intention when I was separated from my body.” Then the Judge said: ”Your conscience is your judge. Therefore, say in conscience what sentence you deserve!” The soul answered: ”My sentence is the most bitter, wretched suffering to endure without end and with no mercy.” Then the devils went off with the soul after hearing his sentence.

Then the Lord said to the bride: ”My bride, see how priests treat me! I chose them from among all the angels and other men, and honored them above them all. However, they provoke me more than all the Jews and Gentiles and more than all the demons.”

Christ shows how much kindness he has shown to priests. Yet they, as ungrateful as an adulterous bride, scorn Christ and love three other lovers, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil. He demonstrates this with the example of a priest who had recently died and was eternally damned.

Chapter 135

“I am like a bridegroom who leads his bride lovingly into his home. Thus did I join priests to myself with my own body, so that they might be in me and I in them. However, they respond to me like an adulteress to her bridegroom: 'Your words displease me. Your wealth is meaningless. Your desire is like poison. There are three others I prefer to love and follow.' Her gentle husband answered: 'My bride, listen to me, wait a little longer, for your words should be my words, your will my will, your wealth my wealth, your desire my desire!' However, she was not at all willing to listen but went off to those other three. When she had gone far enough off so that

the bridegroom could no longer be seen, the first of them, that is, the world, said: 'Here the road divides and I can no longer accompany her, so I want to have all her wealth.' The second, that is, the body, said: 'I am mortal and will become food for worms. She, however, is immortal, so I will leave her here.' The third, that is, the devil, said: 'I am immortal and endure forever. Because she did not want to stay with her man, she will follow me forever.'

This is how these accursed priests treat me. They should be my limbs and be as outstanding among others as a finger on the hand, but they are worse than the devil. So, they will sink down lower in hell than all the devils, unless they reform themselves. I call to them like a bridegroom. I do all I can for them, but the more I call, the farther off they go. My words displease them; my wealth is a burden; they detest my sweet words like poison. I run after them, warning them like a kind father. I show them the forbearance of a gentle lord. I coax them with gifts like a good bridegroom. However, the more I call, the more they turn away from me. They love their three friends more than me, the world and the body, and the third, the devil, who will take them in and never let them go. Woe to them, that they ever became priests and the limbs of my body!

That priest who died recently possessed three qualities. First, he had pride, for he dressed like a bishop. Second, he was celebrated for his wisdom. Third, he inclined his will to whatever he wanted and to whatever was pleasing to his body. He practiced fasting for the sake of bodily health, and did whatever pleased his body, not what was according to my will. But what good has it done him now? As a reward for his pride, he stands before me like a man broken in two, stinking, covered with wounds and broken skin. Because of his celebrity, he stands forgotten before me, and he will be forgotten by men. As a reward for his self-will, worms will take over his body, and demons will torture his soul without end.

Look at what the wretches love and how they act! Where are his friends, where are his possessions, his honor and glory? In return for them all, he will now have everlasting shame. They purchase something small, worldly honor, and they lose something great, eternal joy. Alas for such as

these, woe to them that they were ever born! They sink deeper into hell than anyone else.”

The pious handmaid of Christ, Lady Bridget of blessed memory, received the following revelations in a divinely inspired vision while she was at prayer. They are addressed to the Roman pontiffs Clement VI, Innocent VI, Urban V, and Gregory XI. They deal with the return of the Apostolic See and the Roman Curia to Rome and the reformation of the church by command of almighty God. Two years before the Jubilee Year, Christ gives the bride the words contained here and orders her to send them to Pope Clement in order that he should establish peace between the kings of France and England and come to Italy and proclaim the Jubilee Year. The Reverend Lord Hemming, bishop of Åbo, and Brother Peter, prior of the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra in the kingdom of Sweden.

Chapter 136

The Son of God speaks to the bride, saying: ”Write these words from me to Pope Clement: I exalted you and let you ascend through all the ranks of honor. Rise up and establish peace between the kings of France and England, who are like dangerous beasts, betrayers of souls. Then come to Italy and preach the word there and proclaim a year of salvation and divine love! Look on the streets paved with the blood of my saints, and I shall give you an everlasting reward. Think of times past when you had the audacity to provoke my anger, and I kept silent, when you did what you wanted and what you should not have done, and I was patient, as though I did not hear.

Indeed, my time approaches, and I shall require an account of you for the negligence and audacity of your time. In the same way as I let you ascend through the ranks, you will descend through other ranks that you will truly experience in soul and body, unless you obey my words. Your grandiloquent tongue will be silent. The name by which you are called on earth will be held in oblivion and reproach before me and my saints. I shall also require an account of you as to how unworthily you rose through the

ranks, though it was with my permission, which I, God, know better than your negligent conscience can recall.

I shall seek an account from you with regard to your lukewarmness in reestablishing peace between the kings and your preferential treatment of one of the two parties. Moreover, it shall not be forgotten how greed and ambition flourished and increased in the church during your time, or that you could have reformed and set many things right but that you, lover of the flesh, were unwilling. Get up, therefore, before your fast approaching final hour arrives, and extinguish the negligence of your past by being zealous in your nearly final hour! If you are in doubt about to which spirit these words belong, that kingdom and that person are well known in which amazement and wonders have been wrought.

The justice and mercy of which I speak are drawing near everywhere on earth. Your own conscience tells you that my exhortation is rational and my proposal charitable. Had you not been saved by my patience, you should have descended lower than all your predecessors. Examine, then, the book of your conscience and see if I am telling the truth!"

Christ's words to the bride making mention of Pope Innocent the sixth who was pope after Clement.

The Son speaks to the bride and says: "This Pope Innocent is of better metal than his predecessor and is a fit canvas to receive the finest colors. However, the wickedness of humankind demands that he should soon be taken from their midst. His good intention will be taken into account for his greater reward and glorification. Nevertheless, if he listens to my words given to you and written down in books, he will become better, and those who bring those words to him will receive a more lofty reward."

A revelation touching on Pope Urban, received by the bride of Christ in Rome and concerning the confirmation of the Rule of the Holy Savior and the indulgences of St. Peter in Chains granted by Christ to the cloister of the Blessed Virgin in Vadstena.

Chapter 137

The Son of God speaks to the bride: "A person who has a ball of yarn containing fine gold inside does not stop unwinding it until he finds the gold. Once it is found, the owner uses it for his own comfort and honor. This Pope Urban is gold that is malleable for good ends but is surrounded by worldly cares. Go, therefore, and tell him this from me: Your time is short. Rise up and consider how the souls entrusted to you can obtain salvation. I gave you as coming from my very own lips the rule of an order that should be founded and begun in Vadstena, Sweden.

Now I want you not only to confirm it by your authority but also to give it the strength of your blessing, for you are my vicar on earth. I dictated it and endowed it with a spiritual endowment by granting it the indulgences attracted to the Roman church of St. Peter in Chains. Approve, therefore, in the sight of men that which has been sanctioned in the sight of my heavenly host. If you seek a sign that it is I who am saying this, I have already showed you that, when you first heard my words, your soul was spiritually comforted at the coming of my messenger. If you seek a further sign, none shall be given you but that of the prophet Jonah.

You, my bride, to whom I showed this grace, if you cannot get the letter and favor of the pope and his seal upon the concession of the indulgences without payment in advance, my blessing is enough for you. I shall approve and confirm my words and all the saints shall be your witnesses, and let my Mother be your seal, my Father your guarantor, and the Holy Spirit the comforter of those who come to your cloister."

This is a revelation that the bride of Christ received in Rome concerning the same Pope Urban before his return to Avignon in the year of the Lord 1370. She presented it to him herself in Montefiascone.

Chapter 138

While the aforesaid person was at prayer during a night vigil, it appeared to her as if a voice came to her out of a ring of splendor like the sun. The voice spoke the following words to her. "I am the Mother of God, because thus it was pleasing to him. I am also the Mother of all those who live in heavenly joy. Even though infant babies get what they need as they wish, still their joy grows with an increase of happiness when they see their mother's gentle face. So it pleases God to give all those in the heavenly court the joy and exultation of the purity of my virginity and the beauty of my virtues, even though they possess every good thing through the divine power in an incomprehensible way. I am also the Mother of all those in purgatory, for all the pains they must suffer for the purification of their sins are in some way mitigated because of my prayers at any time. Thus it pleases God to decrease some of the punishments due them according to the strictness of divine justice.

I am also the Mother of all the justice that is in the world - the justice my Son loved with a most perfect love. As a motherly hand is always ready to ward off dangers in defense of her child's heart should someone try to injure it, so too I am constantly ready to defend just people in the world and free them from every spiritual danger. I am also like a mother to all sinners who want to reform and have the intention of not sinning anymore against God. I am willing to take such a sinner into my protection, just like a loving mother who sees her naked son encountering enemies armed with sharp swords. Does she not then bravely step in the way of danger to free her son from the hands of his enemies and snatch him away and hold him joyfully in her arms? This is what I do and what I shall do for all sinners who pray for my Son's mercy with true contrition and love for God.

Listen and pay close attention to what I want to tell you concerning two sons of mine whose names I will mention to you. The first one I mean is my Son Jesus Christ, who was born from my virginal flesh in order to manifest his love and redeem souls. Accordingly, he did not spare his body to toil and bloodshed or disdain to hear insults and endure the pain of his death. He is God himself, almighty in eternal happiness. The second whom

I count as my son is he who occupies the papal See, God's see in the world, provided he obeys God's precepts and loves him with perfect charity.

Now I want to say something about this pope named Urban. Thanks to my prayers, he received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that he should go back to Rome and Italy for no other purpose than to carry out mercy and justice, strengthen the catholic faith, reestablish the peace and, in this way, renew the Holy Church. As a mother carries her child to the place she likes before uncovering her breasts for him, so I led Pope Urban by my prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit from Avignon to Rome without any physical danger whatever. What did he do to me? He turns his back on me rather than face me, and he intends to go away from me. An evil spirit has brought him to this by deceiving him. He is weary of his divine work and wants his own physical comfort. Moreover, the devil is attracting him with worldly pleasure, for he longs too much for his native country after worldly fashion. Likewise, he is led on by the advice of carnal-minded friends who think more of his likes and pleasure than he does of God's likes and glory and the good and salvation of his soul.

If it does happen that he returns to the country where he was elected pope, within a short time he shall be struck with a blow that will knock his teeth out. His sight will become cloudy and darkened, and he will tremble in every limb of his body. The fire of the Holy Spirit will gradually cool in him and depart, and the prayers of all the friends of God, who had decided to pray for him with tearful sighs, will grow sluggish, and their hearts will grow cold to his love. He will render an account concerning two things before God: first, what he did while occupying the papal See; second, what he omitted among the things he could have done for the glory of God by means of his great authority.”

*The following is the first revelation sent to Pope Gregory XI through his Lordship
Latinus Orsini.*

Chapter 139

A person, who was watching in vigil, not sleeping but persevering in prayer, was carried off in spirit. At that moment, all the strength of her body seemed to fail, but her heart was inflamed and felt the exultation of burning love. Her soul was consoled, while her spirit was comforted with divine strength, and her whole conscience was filled with spiritual understanding.

The following vision occurred to this person. She heard a sweet-sounding voice speaking to her as follows: "I am she who gave birth to God's Son, true God, Jesus Christ. I told you some things previously that were to be announced to Pope Urban. Now I am giving you a message to send to Pope Gregory. However, in order that it may be better understood, I will tell you it by means of a parable. If a loving mother saw her own beloved son lying naked and cold on the ground, having no strength to raise himself up, but, from a longing for her motherly attention and milk, wailing and weeping with mournful sounds, she would then quickly run to her son with tender love and compassion and lift him up off the ground with her kind, motherly hands, caressing him gently and warming him soothingly with the motherly warmth of her bosom, and she would feed him sweetly with the milk of her breasts.

This is how I, the Mother of mercy, will treat Pope Gregory, if he would only return to Rome and Italy with a mind to stay there and with the good shepherd's intention of bewailing with sighful tears the eternal loss and damnation of the souls of the sheep entrusted to him, and if he would decide to renew the state of the church with humility and due pastoral charity.

Then, indeed, like a loving mother, I will lift him up off the ground as a cold and naked son, that is, I will take him and his whole heart away from all the earthly desire and worldly love that go against God's will, and I shall warm him sweetly with motherly warmth, that is, with the love in my bosom. I will fill him with my milk, that is, with my prayer, which is like milk. O, how countless are those who are sustained and sweetly sated with the milk of my prayer! I will sate him with the milk of the prayers I

pray for him to my Lord and God, who is my Son, so that he may deign to share and unite his Holy Spirit with the inner blood of the heart of Pope Gregory. He will then be sated with a true and perfect satiety to such an extent that he will no longer want to live for anything else in this world than to add to God's glory with all his might.

See, I have now shown him the motherly love with which I will treat him, if he obeys, because it is God's will, and transfers his see to Rome with humility. Now again, in order that he may not later use ignorance as an excuse, I caution him with a mother's love and tell him what will follow if he is not obedient to what has been said. Without a doubt, he will feel the rod of justice, that is, the anger of my Son. His life will be cut short, and he will be called to God's judgment. No might of worldly lords will then help him, nor will the wisdom and knowledge of medical doctors avail him, nor will the fresh air of his native country do him any good for the prolongation of his life.”

This means that if he comes to Rome and does not carry out the aforesaid things, his life will be cut short, and medical doctors will not do him any good nor will he return to Avignon where the air of his native country might be of benefit to him. Rather, he will die.

Note the following four instructions to the pope: that he should come to Rome with humility, that he should have a mind to stay, that he should bewail the perdition of souls, that he should try to renew the church, etc. If he does not do all these things, his life will be cut short, as stated above after the words "Now again." Thus, it is not enough for the pope merely to come to Rome, but he must carry out all four of the instructions above. Here follows the second vision brought by his Lordship De Nola to the same Pope Gregory XI.

Chapter 140

Praise and service to God for all his love, honor to the most holy and dear Virgin Mary, his Mother, for the compassion she shows to all those whom her Son has redeemed with his precious blood! Holy Father, it

happened to a person well known to you that, while she continued in a vigil of prayer, she felt her heart to be all aflame through the fire of divine charity and the visitation of the Holy Spirit.

This person heard a voice saying to her: "Hear, you who see spiritual visions, and speak what you are now taught, and write the words you now hear to the Roman pontiff Gregory. I who now speak to you am the one whom it pleased God to choose as his Mother, and so he took his human body from my flesh. My Son did a great work of mercy for Pope Gregory when he had me explain to you his most holy will, which I intimated more fully to him when it was transmitted to him in the earlier revelation. This work was done more because of the prayers and tears of God's friends than of any earlier merit on his part.

The devil, his enemy, and I fought a great battle over him. I admonished the same Pope Gregory in the other letter to hasten with humility and divine charity to Rome or Italy and there establish his See and altogether to remain there until his death. However, the devil and the pope's other advisors counseled him to delay and to stay on in the regions where he is as yet, being motivated by earthly affections and the mundane delight and solace of his natural relatives and friends. So the devil now has a greater right and opportunity to tempt him, since he chose to obey the advice of the devil and his worldly friends rather than God's and my own will.

It is true that the pope wants to be ascertained of God's will still further. Therefore, it is right that his desire be fulfilled. He shall know it with certainty to be God's will that he himself should come without any delay to Italy or Rome, and that he should make his way and altogether hasten to come with such speed that he arrives personally in the city or in the province of Italy by next March or as soon as possible, by April at the latest, that is, if he still wants me for his mother. If he disobeys this, let him truly know that he shall never again enjoy any such consolation - any other visitation or revelation from me - in this world but shall, after his death, make an answer before the court of divine justice as to why he refused to

obey God's commands. If he does obey, however, then I will fulfill what I promised in the revelation that was originally delivered to him.

I also inform the pope that there will never be a peace in France so stable and serene that its inhabitants can enjoy complete security and concord until the people of that kingdom placate God my Son by means of great works of piety and humility, having hitherto provoked him to anger and indignation at their many immoral deeds and offenses. Accordingly, he must understand that the journey of those squires from the iniquitous societies of iniquitous men, which they intend to make to the Holy Sepulcher of my Son, is no more pleasing to my Son, the true God, than the gold that the people of Israel cast into the fire out of which the devil welded the molten calf, and this is because of their pride and greed. If they intend to go to the famous Sepulcher, it is more for the sake of pride and greed for money than for the love and honor of God.” At these words, the vision faded.

God's Mother later gave me the following additional message: ”Tell my bishop, the hermit, to close and seal the letter. He should then make another copy of it later on another piece of paper and show this unsealed copy to the abbot, the papal nuncio, and to Count de Nola, so that they may read it and know its contents. Once they have read it, he should give them the closed and sealed letter to send to Pope Gregory without delay. However, he should not give the unsealed letter to them. Instead, I want him to tear it up and shred it to pieces before their eyes. Just as the one letter will be torn into many small pieces, so too, if the pope does not come to Italy at the appointed time and year, the lands of the church, which now obey him in united obedience and submission, will be divided in many parts at the hands of tyrants.

Know most assuredly that, by the increase of this very pope's trials, he will not only hear but also see with his own eyes that what I say is true. Not even with all the authority of his hand will he be able to return those lands of the church to their earlier state of obedience and peace. What I am telling you now is not to be said or written to that abbot, for the seed lies hidden in the earth until it brings forth grain.”

A revelation for the same pope given to the bride in Naples when she had returned from Jerusalem. She did not send this revelation to the pope, because no divine command was given to her.

Chapter 141

Christ appeared to Lady Bridget while she was praying for Pope Gregory XI. He said to her: "Listen carefully, my daughter, to what I tell you. Understand that this Pope Gregory is like a paralytic who cannot use his hands for working or his feet for walking. The disease of paralysis is produced by corrupt blood and humor and by cold. In the same way, an immoderate love of his own blood and the coldness of his tepid mind toward me keep this pope encumbered, as it were. Understand, however, that, by the help of the Virgin Mary, my Mother, he is already beginning to move his hands and feet, that is, to act after my will and for my honor by coming to Rome. Be thus assured that he will come to Rome and initiate the way to future good there but will not finish it."

Lady Bridget then answered: "The Lord, my God, the queen of Naples and many others tell me that it is impossible for him to come to Rome, because the king of France and the cardinals and others are putting as many obstacles as they can in his way. I have heard that many people have arisen there saying that they have God's Spirit and receive divine revelations and visions that they use as a pretext to dissuade him from coming. Therefore I am very much afraid that his coming will be prevented."

God answered: "You have heard it read about how Jeremiah lived in Israel in those days and had God's Spirit for prophecy, and how there were many at the time who had the spirit of dreams and lies. The wicked king put his trust in them, which is why both the king himself and his people fell into captivity. If the king had put his trust in Jeremiah alone, my anger would have been withdrawn from him. So it is now as well. Sages arise or

dreamers or friends not of the spirit but of the flesh, and they use their persuasion on Pope Gregory and dissuade him from the opposite course of action. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, shall still prevail over them and bring the pope to Rome against their encouragement. However, whether you will see him come or not, that is not permitted for you to know.”

A revelation for the same Pope Gregory given to the bride in Naples and delivered to him by a hermit who had renounced the episcopacy.

Chapter 142

Holy Father, that person whom Your Holiness knows well was praying in vigil when she fell into a spiritual rapture and fell into contemplation. She saw in spirit the likeness of a throne on which was seated the likeness of a man of inestimable beauty, a lord of unfathomable might. A great multitude of saints and a countless host of angels stood around the throne. A bishop dressed in pontifical regalia stood at some distance before the throne.

The lord who was seated on the throne spoke to me and said: ”All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me by my Father. Although I seem to be speaking to you with one mouth, I do not speak alone, for the Father and the Holy Spirit speak with me. We three persons are one in the substance of the divinity.”

Then he addressed the bishop and said: ”Listen, Pope Gregory, to the eleven points I say to you, and attend carefully to what I tell you! Why do you hate me so? For what reason is your audacity and presumption so great against me? Your worldly court is plundering my heavenly court. In your pride you are robbing me of my sheep. You unjustly extort and filch the ecclesiastical property that belongs to me as well as the possessions of the subjects of my church, and you give them to your temporal friends. You snatch and unjustly receive goods from my poor and distribute them dishonorably to your rich. Accordingly, your audacity and presumption are

exceedingly great, for you enter into my court so rashly and show no consideration for what is mine.

What have I done to you, Gregory? I patiently allowed you to rise to the pontificate. I explained my will to you beforehand by means of letters transmitted to you by divine revelation from Rome. I admonished you through them for the sake of your soul's salvation, and I warned you in them about your great losses. How have you repaid me for all these benefits? What are you doing about the fact that great pride rules in your court, and insatiable greed and detestable luxury and even the evil ruin of horrible simony?

Furthermore, you are stealing and plundering countless souls away from me. You cast into the fire of Gehenna nearly all those who come to your court, simply because you do not take diligent care of the things pertaining to my court, though you are the prelate and shepherd of my sheep. It is therefore your fault, because you do not prudently consider what must be done or corrected for their spiritual salvation.

Though I could justly condemn you for all the aforesaid, yet I am again admonishing you out of mercy for the salvation of your soul to come to your see in Rome as soon as you can. I leave the time up to you. Know that the more you delay, the greater will be the decrease in your spiritual and moral development. The sooner you come to Rome, the sooner you will experience an increase of virtue and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the more you will be inflamed with the divine fire of my love. Come, then, and do not delay! Come not with your customary pride and worldly pomp, but with all humility and ardent love!

As soon as you have thus come, uproot, pluck out and destroy all the vices of your court! Separate yourself from the counsel of carnal-minded and worldly friends and follow humbly the spiritual counsel of my friends. Approach, then, and be not afraid. Get up like a man and clothe yourself confidently in strength!

Start to reform the church that I purchased with my own blood in order that it may be reformed and led back spiritually to its pristine state of holiness, for nowadays more veneration is shown to a brothel than to my Holy Church.

If you do not obey this my will, then you can be quite sure that you are going to be condemned by me before all my heavenly court with the same kind of sentence and spiritual justice with which one condemns and punishes a worldly prelate that is to be stripped of his rank. He is publicly divested of his sacred, pontifical garb, defeated, and accursed. He is filled with ignominy and shame. This is what I will do to you. I shall send you away from the glory of heaven. Everything that now gives you peace and honor will then be turned into a curse and your eternal shame. Every demon in hell will snatch a piece of your soul, immortal and indestructible as it is, and you will be filled with an everlasting curse instead of a blessing. For as long as I still tolerate your disobedience, you will still prosper.

However, Gregory, my son, I admonish you again to convert to me with humility. Heed my counsel. I am your Father and Creator. If you obey me in what I told you, I will welcome you mercifully like a loving father. Bravely approach the way of justice and you shall prosper. Do not despise the one who loves you. If you obey, I will show you mercy and bless and dress you and adorn you with the precious pontifical regalia of a true pope. I shall clothe you with myself in such a way that you will be in me and I in you, and you shall be glorified in eternity.”

After this had been seen and heard, the vision faded.

The fourth revelation sent by Blessed Bridget to the pope in the month of July in the year of our Lord 1373. She wrote this to a certain hermit who had once been bishop and who was then with the pope in Avignon.

Chapter 143

Our Lord Jesus Christ told me, Reverend Bishop, to write you the following words for you to show to the pope. "The Pope seeks a sign. Tell him that the pharisees sought a sign and that I answered them that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and nights, so I, the Virgin's Son, was dead in the earth for three days and nights. After the promised sign, I, God's Son, suffered, died, and was buried and rose again and ascended into my glory. Thus, Pope Gregory has received the sign of my exhortation to save souls. Let him do with deeds what belongs to my honor. Let him struggle to save souls and return my church to its pristine state and to a better condition. Then he will experience the sign and reward of eternal consolation. He will also have a second sign. If he does not obey my words and come to Italy, he will lose not only temporal goods but also spiritual ones, and he will feel troubled at heart so long as he lives. Though his heart may sometimes seem to have some relief, the remorse of his conscience and his inner troubles will stay with him. The third sign is that I, God, speak miraculously to a woman. What is the purpose of this? What is the benefit of it, if not the salvation and good of souls and the reformation of the wicked and the improvement of the good?"

Concerning the dispute between the pope and Barnabò, I answer that it is loathsome to me beyond measure, for numberless souls are in peril because of it. It is therefore my will that they should reach an agreement. Even if the pope were to be expelled from his papacy, it would be better for him to humble himself and come to an agreement, should the occasion present itself, than to allow so many souls to perish in eternal damnation. Concerning the betterment of the kingdom of France, it will not be made known until the pope himself arrives in Italy.

It is as though there were a gibbet from which hung a rope that a numberless crowd was pulling to one side while only one man was pulling it to the other. So it obviously is with the damnation of souls. A great many are working on it. This pope should gaze on me alone, though everyone else is dissuading him from coming to Rome and resisting it as much as they can. He should trust in me alone, and I will help him, and none of them will prevail over him. As chicks in a nest raise themselves up and

clamor and rejoice when their mother comes, so I shall joyfully run out to meet him and raise him up and honor him in both soul and body.”

The Lord spoke again: ”Because the pope is in doubt as to whether he should come to Rome for sake of the reestablishment of the peace and of my church, I will that he should come next autumn. Let him know that he can do nothing more pleasing to me than to come to Italy.”

The vision received by the bride of Christ concerning the judgment of the soul of a deceased pope.

Chapter 144

The bride saw a person dressed in a pontifical scapular standing in a house spattered with mud from the streets. The roof the house was almost pressing down on the person's skull. Black Ethiopians with hooks and other instruments of torture were surrounding the house but were unable to touch the said person, though they filled him with the greatest of terror.

Then I heard a voice saying to me: ”This is the soul of that pope whom you knew. This house is his spiritual reward. He dealt in worldly affairs, and his reward, therefore, is not yet a shining one, not until he has been cleansed in purgatory and made brighter with spiritual prayers and God's love. The roof is pressing down upon him. This is a mystical sign, for the roof symbolizes love for God. The wider and higher it is in respect to spiritual things and divine fervor, the greater love one has. Because the love of this soul was ardent for certain worldly affairs and preferred to follow her self-will, the roof, which is bright and high in the case of God's elect, is too low for her, until it is enlarged by the blood of God's Son and the intervention of the heavenly court. The soul is dressed in a scapular. This is a sign that he was eager to follow the religious life and his vocation, but his efforts were not great enough to be an example for advanced souls or a model for the perfect.

Now, however, you are permitted to know three of the works that he did in his life on account of which he is now being punished. The first was that he was disobedient toward God and his own conscience, for which his conscience felt contrition and remorse. The second is that he gave dispensations in some cases for the sake of carnal affection due to following his own self-will. The third is that he ignored some things that he might have corrected in order not to offend those he loved. Know, however, that this soul is not in the company of those that descend into hell, nor with those that come to the more painful trials of purgatory. Instead, he finds himself with those who day by day hasten nearer to the grace and vision of the majesty of almighty God.”

Book 5 "The Book of Questions"

Prologue

Book Five of the Heavenly Revelations of Christ to blessed Bridget of the kingdom of Sweden is rightly entitled the Book of Questions because it proceeds by way of questions to which Christ the Lord gives wonderful answers. It was revealed to the lady in a singular manner, as she and her confessors have often testified explicitly. Once it happened that she was going by horse one day to her castle in Vadstena along with several of her household who were also on horseback. While she was riding, she began to lift up her mind to God in prayer. Immediately, she fell into a spiritual rapture and continued on as though somehow outside herself and separated from her bodily senses, suspended in an ecstasy of mental contemplation.

She saw in spirit a ladder fixed firmly in the earth, the top of which was touching heaven. At its top in heaven she saw the Lord Jesus Christ sitting on a wonderful throne like a Judge in the act of judgment. At his feet stood the Virgin Mary, and surrounding the throne was a countless host of angels and a vast multitude of saints. Lady Bridget saw a certain monk midway up the ladder, a man whom she recognized and who was still alive, a learned scholar in the science of theology but full of guile and devilish wickedness. With his most impatient and agitated bearing he seemed more like a devil than a humble monk. For the lady could see all the inner thoughts and feelings of the monk's heart and how he disclosed them to Christ the Judge seated on the throne through his uncontrolled and agitated way of questioning, as follows below.

Lady Bridget then saw and heard in spirit how Christ the Judge, with a meek and gentle bearing, responded to those questions briefly one by one with utmost wisdom, and how the Virgin Mary, our Lady, spoke a few words now and then to Lady Bridget, as this book will explain below in greater detail.

In that one moment Lady Bridget received this whole book in her mind in one and the same revelation. As she was now approaching the castle, her servants took hold of the horse's bridle and then began to shake her gently and to waken her, as it were, from her rapture. When she came to herself again, she felt terribly sad over the loss of such divine sweetness.

The Book of Questions remained thus effectively fixed in her heart and memory, as though it had all been carved on a marble tablet. She wrote it down in her own language straightaway, and then her confessor translated it into the literary language, just as he had been accustomed to translating the other books of revelations.

Interrogation 1

I saw a throne in heaven on which sat the Lord Jesus Christ as Judge. At his feet sat the Virgin Mary. Surrounding the throne was a host of angels and a countless multitude of saints. A certain monk, a great scholar of theology, stood high up on a rung of a ladder that was fixed in the earth and whose top reached up to heaven. With an impatient and agitated bearing, as though full of wickedness and guile, he put questions to the Judge:

First question. "O Judge, I ask you: You gave me a mouth. May I not say what I please?"

Second question. "You gave me eyes. May I not look at what I like with them?"

Third question. "You gave me ears. Why should I not listen to what I please with them?"

Fourth question. "You gave me hands. Why should I not do what I want with them?"

Fifth question. "You gave me feet. Why should I not walk where I wish with them?"

Christ's answer to the first question. Seated on the throne, the Judge, whose bearing was meek and gentle, answered him, saying: "Friend, I gave you a mouth in order rationally to speak words beneficial to your soul and body as well as words for my glory."

Answer to the second question. "Second, I gave you eyes that you might see the evils you must flee and the healthful things you must preserve."

Answer to the third question. "Third, I gave you ears that you might hear that which pertains to truth and goodness."

Answer to the fourth question. "Fourth, I gave you hands that you might use them to do that which is necessary for the body but not harmful for the soul."

Answer to the fifth question. "Fifth, I gave you feet that you might leave behind the love of the world and go toward your soul's rest and love and toward me, your Creator and Redeemer."

Interrogation 2

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Christ the Judge, you bore the most painful suffering by your own free will. Why then should I not possess honor and be proud in the world?"

Second question. "You gave me temporal goods. Why then should I not own what I want?"

Third question. "Why did you give me the limbs of my body, if I may not move and exercise them at will?"

Fourth question. "Why did you give law and justice if not for seeking revenge?"

Fifth question. "You let us have quiet and rest, but why did you arrange for us to experience weariness and tribulation?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, human pride is so long endured as to exalt humility and show forth my goodness. And since pride was not created by me but invented by the devil, it must be shunned, because it leads to hell. But humility must be kept, because it leads to heaven. I, God, taught this by my word and example."

Answer to the second question. "I have given and conceded temporal goods to people in order that they might make rational use of them and exchange created goods for something uncreated, that is, for me, their Lord and Creator, by praising and honoring me for my good creation and by not living in accordance with the desires of the flesh."

Answer to the third question. "A person is given the limbs of the body in order that the soul might see in them a certain likeness of the virtues and so that they might be the soul's instruments for duty and virtue."

Answer to the fourth question. "Justice and law were indeed established by me so that they might be fulfilled with supernatural charity and compassion and so that godly unity and harmony might be cemented among humans."

Answer to the fifth question. "I gave people bodily rest and quiet in order to strengthen the weakness of the flesh and to endow the soul with fortitude and virtue. But because the flesh sometimes grows thoughtlessly insolent, one must cheerfully endure tribulations and all other such corrective measures."

Interrogation 3

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why did you give us the bodily senses, if we are not to move and live according to carnal feelings?"

Second question. "And why did you give us the means of carnal sustenance, such as food and other delectable things, if we are not to live in order to sate the carnal appetite?"

Third question. "Why did you give us free will, if we are not to follow our own wishes?"

Fourth question. "Why did you give men and women the seed of intercourse and a sexual nature, if the seed is not to be spilled according to the carnal appetite?"

Fifth question. "Why did you give us a heart and a will, if not to choose that which tastes sweetest and to love the more enjoyable delights?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, I gave humans sense and understanding in order that they might meditate on and imitate the ways of life and shun the ways of death."

Answer to the second question. "I gave food and other carnal necessities for the moderate sustenance of the body and so that people might exercise the virtues of the soul with greater strength without growing weak from excessive consumption."

Answer to the third question. "I gave humans free will so that they might give up their own will for me, their God, and thus obtain a greater reward."

Answer to the fourth question. "I gave them the seed of intercourse so that it might germinate at the right place and in the right way and bear fruit for a just and rational cause."

Answer to the fifth question. "I gave humans a heart so that they might keep within it me, their God, who am everywhere and incomprehensible, and so that the thought of me should be their delight."

The first revelation in the Book of Questions made to Lady Bridget by the Virgin Mary, in which the Virgin Mary informs her of five virtues that she ought to have within herself and of five others without.

Revelation 1

The Mother speaks: "Daughter, you should have five attributes within you and five without. First without: a mouth pure from backbiting, ears closed to vain speech, chaste eyes, hands busy with good works, and the avoidance of dealings with the world. Within you should have these five: loving God fervently, desiring him wisely, distributing temporal goods reasonably with a just and upright intention, fleeing from the world humbly, and awaiting my promises steadfastly and patiently."

Interrogation 4

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, why should I seek the wisdom of God when I have the wisdom of the world?"

Second question. "Why should I mourn and weep when I have worldly joy and honor in plenty?"

Third question. "Tell me: why or in what way should I rejoice in the affliction of the flesh?"

Fourth question. "Why should I be afraid, when I have the strength of my own power?"

Fifth question. "Why should I obey others, if I have control over my own will?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, whoever is wise concerning the world is blind concerning me, his God. Therefore, in order to obtain my divine wisdom, one must seek it diligently and humbly."

Answer to the second question. "Whoever has worldly honors and joy is troubled by various cares and gets entangled in bitter situations that lead to hell. In order not to be turned aside from heaven's way, one must be piously solicitous and pray and weep."

Answer to the third question. "It is also very profitable to rejoice in the affliction and infirmity of the body, because my mercy comes to those who are afflicted in body, and by my mercy they approach eternal life more easily."

Answer to the fourth question. "Furthermore, whosoever is strong is strong because of me, and I am stronger than he. Therefore one must be ever fearful lest strength be taken away."

Answer to the fifth question. "Whosoever holds his free choice in his hands should be fearful and should realize in truth that nothing so easily leads to eternal punishment as self-will without a leader. Accordingly, anyone who relinquishes his or her own will to me, his God, in obedience to me, shall have heaven without punishment."

Interrogation 5

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, why did you create worms that are harmful and useless?"

Second question. "Why did you create wild beasts that are also harmful to humankind?"

Third question. "Why do you let sickness and pain into bodies?"

Fourth question. "Why do you endure the wickedness of wicked judges who scourge and harass their underlings like purchased slaves?"

Fifth question. "Why is the human body afflicted even at the point of death?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, as God and Judge I have created heaven and earth and all that are in them, and yet nothing without cause nor without some likeness to spiritual things. Just as the souls of holy people resemble the holy angels who live and are happy, so too the souls of the unrighteous become like the demons who are eternally dying. Therefore, since you asked why I created worms, I answer you that I created them in order to show forth the manifold power of my wisdom and goodness. For, although they can be harmful, nevertheless they do no harm without my permission and only when sin demands it, so that man, who scorns to submit to his superior, may bemoan his capacity to be afflicted by lesser creatures, and also in order that he may know himself to be nothing without me - whom even the irrational creatures serve and they all stand at my beck and call."

Answer to the second question. "As to why I created wild beasts, I answer: All things that I have created are not only good but very good and have been created either for the use or trial of humankind or for the use of other creatures and in order that humans might so much the more humbly serve their God inasmuch as they are more blessed than all the rest.

However, beasts do harm in the temporal world for a twofold reason. First, so that the wicked may be corrected and beware, and so that wicked people might come to understand through their torments that they must obey me, their superior. Second, they also do harm to good people with a view to their advancement in virtue and for their purification. And because the human race rebelled against me, their God, through sin, all those creatures that had been subject to humans have consequently rebelled against them.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why sickness comes upon the body, I answer that this happens both as a strong warning and because of the vice of incontinence and excess, in order that people may learn spiritual moderation and patience by restraining the flesh.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why wicked judges are tolerated, this is for the purification of others and also because of my patience, in order that, just as gold is purified by fire, so too, by the evil of scoundrels, souls may be purified and instructed and held back from doing what they should not do. Furthermore, I patiently tolerate the wicked so as to separate the devil's chaff from the wheat of the good, and in order to fulfill their wishes according to my hidden, divine justice.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why the body suffers pain in death, it is just that a person should be punished by means of that in which she or he has sinned. If she sins through inordinate lust, it is right for her to be punished with proportionate bitterness and pain. For that reason, death begins for some people on earth and will last without end in hell, while death ends for others in purgatory and everlasting joy commences.”

The second revelation in the Book of Questions, in which the Virgin Mary speaks to blessed Bridget and tells her that a person who wishes to taste divine sweetness must first endure bitterness.

Revelation 2

The Mother speaks: "Which of the saints had the sweetness of the Spirit without first experiencing bitterness? Therefore, a person who longs for sweetness should not run away from things that are bitter."

Interrogation 6

First question. Again he appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does one infant emerge alive from the mother's womb and obtain baptism, while another, having received a soul, dies in the mother's belly?"

Second question. "Why do many setbacks occur to a righteous person, while an unrighteous gets everything he or she wishes?"

Third question. "Why do disease, hunger, and other bodily afflictions occur?"

Fourth question. "Why does death come so unexpectedly that it can very rarely be foreseen?"

Fifth question. "Why do you allow men full of deliberate wrath and envy to go to war in a spirit of vengeance?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, your inquiries are not made out of love but are made through my permission. So I answer you through the likeness of words. You ask why one infant dies in the mother's belly while another emerges alive. There is a reason. All the strength of the child's body comes, of course, from the seed of its father and mother; however, if it is conceived without due strength, because of some weakness of its father or mother, it dies quickly. As a result of the negligence or carelessness of the parents as well as of my divine justice, many times it happens that what was joined together comes apart quickly.

Yet a soul is not brought to the harshest punishment for this reason, however little time it had for giving life to the body, but, rather, it comes to the mercy that is known to me. Just as the sun shining into a house is not seen as it is in its beauty - only those who look into the sky see its rays - so too the souls of such children, though they do not see my face for lack of baptism, are nevertheless closer to my mercy than to punishment, but not in the same way as my elect.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why do setbacks occur to the righteous, I answer: My righteousness is such that each righteous person obtains what he or she desires. However, that person is not righteous who does not desire to suffer setbacks for the sake of obedience and for the perfection of righteousness, and who does not do good deeds for his or her neighbor in godly love. My friends, reflecting on the things that I, their God and Redeemer, have done and promised to them, and observing what evil there is in the world willingly pray for worldly setbacks rather than for success as an act of prudence and for the sake of my honor and their own salvation and as a precaution against sin. So I let trouble befall them. Although some people endure it less patiently than others, still I do not let it happen without a reason, and I stand by them in their trouble.

It is like a son who is chastised by a loving mother in boyhood and little knows how to thank her, since he does not understand the reason for the reproof. However, when he reaches the age of discretion he thanks his mother because, due to her disciplining him, he was led away from evil ways and grew accustomed to good manners and discipline.

I treat my chosen ones similarly. They commit their will to me and love me above all things. Then they experience troubles for a time and, although they may not fully understand my blessings at present, I am doing what is best for them in the future. On the contrary, because they do not care about righteousness and are not afraid to inflict injury on others, and because they pray for transient things and love earthly delights, the impious prosper for a time and are free from distress due to my justice so that they may not commit further sin should setbacks befall them. However, not all bad people get the things they desire, and this is in order

that they may realize that it is in my power to give good things to whomever I want, even to the ungrateful, though they do not deserve it.”

Answer to third question. ”As to why disease and hunger come, I answer: It is written in the law that one who commits theft should repay more than he has taken. Since ungrateful people receive my gifts and misuse them and do not pay me my due honor, I therefore exact more bodily affliction in the present in order that their souls may be spared in the future. At times I also spare the body but punish people in and by means of that which they love, so that the person who would not acknowledge me when glad may receive knowledge indeed and understanding when afflicted.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why death comes so unexpectedly, I answer: If someone were to know the time of his or her death, he or she would serve me out of fear and would succumb out of sorrow. Accordingly, in order that people may serve me out of love and always be anxious about themselves but sure of me, the hour of their departure is uncertain, and rightly so. When humankind forsook that which was certain and true, it was needful and right for them to be afflicted by uncertainty.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why I permit men to go to war full of wrath, I answer: Anyone who is wholly bent on harming his neighbor is like the devil and is a limb and instrument of the devil. I would do the devil wrong if I took his servant from him unjustly. Therefore, even as I make use of my instrument for whatever I please, so too it is right that the devil should act through the person who wants to be his limb rather than mine and should do what is in his right, either for the purgation of others or for the perfection of his own wickedness - yet only insofar as I permit it and as sin requires.”

Interrogation 7

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why are the words ugly and beautiful used in the world?"

Second question. "Why must I hate the beauty of the world, seeing that I am beautiful and of noble ancestry?"

Third question. "Why should I not exalt myself over others, seeing that I am rich?"

Fourth question. "Why should I not put myself ahead of others, seeing that I am more honorable than others?"

Fifth question. "Why should I not seek my own praise, seeing that I am good and praiseworthy?"

Sixth question. "If I do other people favors, why should I not demand remuneration?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, ugly and beautiful in the world are like bitter and sweet. Ugliness of the world, which is adversity and contempt of the world, is like a kind of bitterness conducive to the health of the righteous. Beautiful to the world is its prosperity, which is like a kind of ingratiating sweetness, false and seductive. Whoever, therefore, flees the beauty of the world and spits out its sweetness will not come to the ugliness of hell or taste its bitterness but will instead ascend to my joy. Thus, in order to escape the ugliness of hell and attain the sweetness of heaven, it is necessary to pursue the ugliness of the world rather than its beauty. Although I made all things well, and all created things are very good, great caution should be used toward the things that could present an occasion of damage to the soul for those who make irrational use of my gifts."

Answer to the second question. "As to why you must not boast about your ancestry, I answer: From your father you received the ugliest filth and rot; in the womb of your mother you were as though dead and all unclean.

It was not in your power to be born of noble or ignoble parents. Rather, my tenderness and goodness brought you forth into this light. So, you, who call yourself noble, humble yourself under me, your God, who let you be born of noble parents. Live in harmony with your neighbor, who is made of the same stuff as you, though by my providence you are of noble birth, as the world sees it, while he is of humble birth. In fact, O nobleman, you should be more fearful than the man of low birth, for the nobler and wealthier you are, the stricter will be the account demanded of you and the greater the judgment, inasmuch as you have received more.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why you must not take pride in riches, I answer: The riches of the world only belong to you insofar as you need them for food and clothing. The world was made for this: that man, having sustenance for his body, might through work and humility return to me, his God, whom he scorned in his disobedience and neglected in his pride. However, if you claim that the temporal goods belong to you, I assure you that you are in effect forcibly usurping for yourself all that you possess beyond your needs. All temporal goods ought to belong to the community and be equally accessible to the needy out of charity.

You usurp for your own superfluous possession things that should be given to others out of compassion. However, many people do own much more than others but in a rational way, and they distribute it in discreet fashion. Therefore, in order not to be accused more severely at the judgment because you received more than others, it is advisable for you not to put yourself ahead of others by acting haughtily and hoarding possessions. As pleasant as it is in the world to have more temporal goods than others and to have them in abundance, it will likewise be terrible and painful beyond measure at the judgment not to have administered in reasonable fashion even licitly held goods.”

Answer to the fourth and fifth questions. ”As to why self-praise should not be sought, I answer: No one is good in himself, except for me alone, God, and anyone who is good is good through me alone. Therefore, if you who are nothing seek praise for yourself and not for me from whom comes every perfect gift, then your praise is false and you do me, your

Creator, an injustice. As all the good things that you have come from me, so all praise should be given to me. And just as I, your God, bestow on you all worldly goods - strength, health, knowledge, and discernment for considering what is to your advantage, and time and life - so too I alone should be glorified in everything, that is, if you make good and rational use of the things given you. However, if you make bad use of them, then the fault is yours and the ingratitude is yours.”

Answer to the sixth question. ”As to why temporal remuneration should not be sought for good works in the present, I answer you: Whenever someone does good to others with the intention of caring not for a human reward but only for such a reward as I, God, may wish to grant, then he or she will gain much in exchange for little, something eternal for something temporal. But a person who seeks earthly in exchange for temporal goods will get what he or she desires and will lose the everlasting good. Therefore, in order to obtain an eternal good for a fleeting one, it is more advantageous not to seek a human reward but one that comes from me.”

Interrogation 8

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why do you permit gods to be placed in temples and receive honor as yourself, even though your kingdom is nobler beyond all else?”

Second question. ”Why do you not let people see your glory in this life, so that they may desire it more fervently?”

Third question. ”Since your saints and angels are nobler and holier above all other creatures, why are they not seen by people in this life?”

Fourth question. "Since the punishments of hell are horrible beyond compare, why do you not let people see them in this life so that they may flee from them?"

Fifth question. "Since the devils are ugly and misshapen beyond compare, why are they not visible to humans, for then nobody would follow them or give them their consent?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "My friend, I am God, the creator of all, who does no more injustice to the wicked than to the good, because I am justice itself. It is in accord with my justice that entry into heaven must be gained through steadfast faith, rational hope, and fervent love. A person ponders more frequently and adores more lovingly that which the heart loves more and loves with greater fervor. So it is with the gods that are placed in temples - though they are not gods nor creators, since there is but one sole creator, I myself, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the owners of temples and people in general love the gods more than they love me, seeking to achieve worldly success rather than to live with me.

If I were to destroy the things that people love more than me, and make the people adore me against their will, then I would certainly do them an injustice by taking away their free will and desire from them. Since they have no faith in me, and there is in their hearts something more delightful than me, I reasonably permit them to produce externally what they love and long for in their minds. Because they love creation more than me, the Creator, whom they can know by probable signs and deeds, if only they would make use of their reason, and because they are blind, accursed is their creation and accursed are their idols. They themselves shall stand in shame and be sentenced for their folly, because they refuse to understand how sweet I am, their God, who created and redeemed humankind out of fervent love."

Answer to the second question. "As to why my glory is not seen, I answer: My glory is ineffable and cannot be compared to anything in sweetness and goodness. If my glory were to be seen as it is, the

corruptible human body would grow weak and fail as did the senses of those who saw my glory on the mount. Besides, because of the soul's joy, the body would leave off working and be incapable of physical activity. Since there is no entry into heaven without the labor of love, and in order that faith might have its reward and the body be able to work, my glory is therefore hidden for a time, so that through desire and faith it may be seen more fully with greater happiness forever."

Answer to the third question. "As to why the saints are not seen as they are, I answer: If my saints were openly visible and seen to speak, then honor would be given to them as to myself, and faith would have not merit. Besides, weak flesh would not be capable of seeing them, and it does not accord with my justice that such great weakness should behold so splendid a sight. Consequently, my saints are neither heard nor seen as they are, in order that I should receive all the honor and so that people may know that no one is to be loved more than me. If my saints do at times appear, however, it is not in that form of glory in which they truly live, but rather in that form in which they can be seen without any confusion of the physical intelligence, with their full power remaining hidden."

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why the punishments of hell are not seen, I answer: If the punishments of hell were visibly to be seen such as they are, people would be completely frozen with fear and would seek heaven out of fear rather than love. Since nobody should desire the joy of heaven out of fear of punishment but out of divine love, the punishments therefore remain hidden for now. Of course, just as good and holy people may not experience exactly that kind of indescribable joy prior to the separation of body and soul, nor can the wicked experience their punishments. But once the soul is separated from the body, then they discover those experiences they were unwilling to probe with their intelligence while they were still able."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why devils make no visible appearance, I answer: If their horrible ugliness were seen such as it is, the soul of the person seeing it would lose her wits at the very sight, and her whole body would quake and quail like someone trembling with fear, and

her whole heart would fail and die of fright, and her feet would not be able to sustain the weight of her limbs. In order that the soul should remain steady in her senses and her heart watchful in my love and her body capable of laboring in my service, the ugliness of devils is therefore hidden - also in order to check their evil purposes.”

The third revelation in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and teaches her through a parable about a true doctor who is a healer and a false doctor who is a killer, and about a man who only has an opinion. He tells her that a man who takes in sinners and gives them help or an opportunity for sinning, should they die in their sin, then God will exact the death of their souls at his hand. However, if he takes them in and they cease from sinning and are instructed by him in the virtues and improved by his teaching, both they and he will receive a great reward from God.

Revelation 3

The Son of God speaks: ”If there is a sick man in the house and an experienced doctor visits him, the doctor soon determines the nature of the sickness from the external symptoms. However, if he recognizes the patient's sickness but gives him medicine that results in death, then he is denounced as a murderer and not a true doctor. A person who knows how to cure but practices medicine for the sake of worldly remuneration will get no wages from me. But if he practices medicine for love of me and for my honor, then I am bound to give him his wages. If a person is not an expert in medicine but is confident that, in his opinion, this or that would be good for the patient, and gives him it with a kindly intention, he should not be denounced as a murderer if the patient dies, but only as a foolish and presumptuous man. If the patient improves from the fool's medicine, then he should not get the wages of an expert but only of an opiner, since he gave the medicine according to his opinion, rather than knowledge.

Now I will tell you what these things mean. Those people you know are spiritually sick and inclined to pride and cupidity by following their own will. Therefore, if their friend, whom I compare to a doctor, gives them help and advice by which they grow in pride and ambition and die

spiritually, I shall surely exact their death at his hand. Although they die from their own iniquity, yet he is the agent and cause of their death, and he will most assuredly not be immune from punishment. If, led by a natural love, he supports them and helps them to advance in the world for the sake of his own convenience and worldly honor, let him not expect any wages from me!

On the other hand, if he considers their situation like a good doctor and says to himself: 'These people are sick and need medicine. Therefore, although my medicine seems bitter to them, yet it is healthy and I will still give it to them so that they will not die a harsher death. Accordingly, while restraining them, I shall also give them food, so that they do not faint from hunger; I shall give them clothing, so that they can make a suitable appearance according to their state; I shall hold them to my treatment, so that they do not grow haughty; I shall also provide for their other needs, so that they do not become proud and perish in their presumption or have occasion to do harm to others.' Such a doctor as this will receive a great reward from me, for this kind of corrective treatment pleases me.

But if their friend thinks to himself in this way: 'I shall give them what is necessary, although I do not know whether it is beneficial for them or not. Nonetheless I do not think I am displeasing God or harming their health. Then if they die, or rather transgress, from what he gives them, their friend will not be declared a murderer. However, due to his good will and kindly affection, though their friend will not get a full recompense, insofar as he shows love for their souls, the sick will find relief and make progress toward health, which they would have obtained only with difficulty without the aid of his charity. However, one piece of advice is necessary here.

According to a popular proverb, a dangerous animal is not dangerous when caged in. If it is in a cage and has its needs met, then it grows just as strong and fat as an animal that roams free. Now, because these people are of the kind whose heart and blood seek lofty things, and because the more their will grows thirstier, the more it drinks, their friend should not give

them any occasion for transgression, since they desire to inflame their appetites but are not strong enough to extinguish them.”

Interrogation 9

First question. After this was said, the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why do you seem unfair in your gifts and graces in that you gave preference to Mary your Mother before every creature and exalted her above the angels?”

Second question. ”Why did you give to the angels a spirit without a body and the state of heavenly joy, while to humankind you gave a spirit in an earthly vessel, a tearful birth, a toilsome life and a painful death?”

Third question. ”Why did you give humankind a rational intellect and sense, but did not give reason to the animals?”

Fourth question. ”Why did you give life to animals and not to other insensate creatures?”

Fifth question. ”Why is there not light at night as during day?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”Friend, in my deity are contained all future things and everything that will be done as well as everything that has been done, all of them being foreseen and foreknown from the start. Just as the fall of humankind was something foreknown and permitted by God's justice but not accomplished through God nor something that had to happen due to God's foreknowledge, so too it was foreknown from eternity that the liberation of humankind would be accomplished through God's mercy.

You ask why I preferred my mother Mary above all others and loved her above every creature. This is because a special mark of virtue was found in her. As when several logs are piled up and a fire is kindled, that

log which is most capable and fit for burning is more quickly set aflame and starts burning. It was the same with Mary. When the fire of divine love, which in itself is immutable and eternal, began to kindle and be seen, and the deity wished to become incarnate, there was no creature more capable and fitter to receive this fire of love than the Virgin Mary, for no creature burned with such divine charity as she. And although her love has been shown and revealed in the last age, yet it was foreseen before the beginning of the world. Thus it was predetermined in the deity from all eternity that just as no one was found like her in charity, so too no one would be equal to her in grace and blessing.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why I gave the angel a spirit without a body, I answer: I created spirits in the beginning, before times and ages, so that they might rejoice in my goodness and glory according to my will and of their own free choice. Some of them became proud and turned good into evil for themselves, making disordered use of their free will. They fell accordingly, because there was nothing evil in nature or creation except the disorder of self-will. Other spirits chose to remain in humility under me their God; accordingly, they earned a state of everlasting stability, for it is right and just that I, God, who am uncreated spirit and creator and Lord of all things, should have spirits serving me that are more subtle and swift than other creatures.

Since it was surely not suitable for me to have my heavenly host diminished, in order to take the place of the fallen angels, I created human beings who, by their free choice and good will, could win that same rank which the angels had abandoned. And so, if they had a soul without a body, they would not be able to win so great a good or to struggle for it. The attainment of eternal glory is the reason why the soul is joined to the body. Hardships also accrue to them so that they might make trial of their power of choice as well as of their weaknesses so as not to grow proud. Likewise, divine justice has also granted them a tearful entry and departure as well as a toilsome life, so that they might desire the glory for which they were created and make amends for their voluntary disobedience.”

Answer to the third question. "As to why animals do not have a rational intellect as humans do, I answer you: All things, whatsoever have been created, are for the use of humankind, either for their needs and upkeep or for their formation and correction or for their comfort and humiliation. If brute beasts had a human intellect, they would surely cause trouble to men, and would be of harm rather than of benefit. Therefore, in order that all things might be subject to humankind, for whose sake all things were made, and in order that all things might fear them but that they might fear none but me, their God, for this reason a rational intellect was not given to animals."

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why insensate things do not have life, I answer: Everything that lives will die, and every living thing is in motion unless impeded by some obstacle. If insensate things had life, they would move themselves more against humankind than for it. Therefore, in order that all things should be a comfort to humankind, the higher beings or angels were given to be their guardians with whom they share reason and immortality of soul. Lower beings, both sensate and insensate creatures, were given to them for their use and upkeep as well as for their education and exercise."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why it is not always daylight, I answer with a comparison. There are wheels under every cart or wagon so that the load can be more easily moved forward, and the back wheels follow the front wheels. It is similar in spiritual matters. The world is a great load, burdening humankind with trouble and strife. This is no wonder, for when humans disdained the place of rest, so it was only right that they should experience the place of toil. In order that they might more easily bear the burden of this world, an alternation and change of times, that is, day and night, summer and winter, was given for their rest and exercise. When contraries meet, such as strong and weak, it is reasonable to condescend to the weak part so that it can stand with the help of the strong; otherwise the weak would be destroyed.

So it is also with humankind. Although by virtue of their immortal souls, they could continue in contemplation and labor, they would

nevertheless falter by virtue of their weak body. Light was made so that humans, who partake of both higher and lower natures, might be able to maintain themselves, laboring by day and recalling the sweetness of the eternal light that they had lost. Night was made for the sake of bodily rest, so that they might have the desire of reaching the place where there is neither night nor labor but perpetual day and everlasting glory.”

The fourth revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ beautifully praises every limb of the Virgin Mary his Mother, giving them a spiritual and allegorical meaning by comparing them to virtues; he also declares the Virgin to be most worthy of a queenly crown.

Revelation 4

The Son speaks: ”I am crowned king in my divinity without beginning and without end. A crown has neither beginning nor end; thus it is a symbol of my power, which had no beginning and will have no end. I had another crown, too, in my keeping: I myself, God, am that crown. It was prepared for the person who had the greatest love for me. And you, my most sweet Mother, won this crown and drew it to yourself through righteousness and love. The angels and other saints bear witness that your love for me was more ardent and your chastity more pure than that of any other, and that it was more pleasing to me than all else.

Your head was like gleaming gold and your hair like sunbeams, because your most pure virginity, which is like the head of all your virtues, as well as your control over every illicit desire pleased me and shone in my sight with all humility. You are rightly called the crowned queen over all creation - ”queen” for the sake of your purity, ”crowned” for your excellent worth. Your brow was incomparably white, a symbol of the delicacy of your conscience, in which lies the fullness of human knowledge, and where the sweetness of divine wisdom shines on all. Your eyes were so bright and clear in my Father's sight that he could see himself in them, for in your spiritual eyes and in your soul's intellect the Father

saw your entire will, namely, that you desired nothing but him and wished for nothing except as according to his will.

Your ears were as pure and open as the most beautiful windows when Gabriel laid my will before you and when I, God, became flesh in you. Your cheeks were of the fairest hue, white and red, for the fame of your praiseworthy deeds and the beauty of your character, which burned within you each day, were pleasing to me. Truly, God my Father rejoiced in the beauty of your character and never took his eyes away from you. By your love, all have obtained love. Your mouth was like a lamp, inwardly burning and outwardly shedding light, for the words and affections of your soul were inwardly on fire with divine understanding and shone outwardly in the graceful carriage of your body and the lovely harmony of your virtues. Truly, most dear Mother, the word of your mouth somehow drew my divinity to you, and the fervor of your divine sweetness never separated me from you, since your words were sweeter than honey and honeycomb.

Your neck is nobly erect and beautifully held high, because the righteousness of your whole soul is directed to me and sways with my will, since it was never inclined to any sin of pride. Just as the neck inclines with the head, so too your every intention and act bends to my will. Your breast was so full of every virtuous charm that there is no good in me that is not in you as well, for you drew every good thing to yourself by the sweetness of your character, at the moment when it both pleased my divinity to enter into you and my humanity to live with you and drink the milk from your nipples. Your arms were beautiful through true obedience and endurance of toil. Your bodily hands touched my humanity, and I rested in your arms with my divinity.

Your womb was as pure as ivory and was like a space made out of gems of virtue, for your constancy of conscience and faith never grew lukewarm and could not be damaged by tribulation. The walls of your womb, that is, of your faith, were like gleaming gold, and on them the strength of your virtues was recorded, your prudence and justice and temperance along with perfect perseverance, for all your virtues were

perfected with divine charity. Your feet were washed full clean as though with fragrant herbs, for the hope and the affections of your soul were directed toward me, your God, and were fragrant as an example for others to imitate. Your womb was a spiritual and physical space so desirable to me and your soul was so pleasing to me that I did not disdain to come down to you from the highest heaven and to dwell in you. No, rather, I was most pleased and delighted. Therefore, dear Mother, the crown that was held in my keeping, that crown that is I, myself, God, who was to become incarnate, should be placed on no one but you, for you are truly Mother and Virgin.”

Interrogation 10

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: “O Judge, I ask you: Given that you are most powerful and beautiful and virtuous, why did you cover your divinity, which is incomparably brighter than the sun, with such a sack - I mean your human nature?”

Second question. “How does your divinity encompass all things in itself yet is encompassed by none, and contains all things yet is contained by none?”

Third question. “Why did you wish to lie in the Virgin's womb so long and did not emerge as soon as you were conceived?”

Fourth question. “Given that you can do all things and are present everywhere, why did you not immediately appear with the stature that you had when you were thirty years old?”

Fifth question. “Given that you were not born of Abraham's seed through a father, why did you wish to be circumcised?”

Sixth question. “Given that you were conceived and born without sin, why did you wish to be baptized?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered him: "Friend, I will answer you with a comparison. There is a variety of grapes whose wine is so strong that it comes out of the grapes without the contact of man. The owner waits for it to ripen and then just puts a glass under it. The wine does not wait for the glass but the glass for the wine. If several glasses are placed under it, the wine runs into the glass that is nearest. This grapevine represents my divinity, which is so full of the wine of godly love that all the choirs of angels are filled up with it and all things, no matter what, partake of it. But the human race became unworthy of it through disobedience.

When God my Father wanted to manifest his love at a point in time foreseen from eternity, he sent his wine, that is, he sent me, his Son, into the nearest glass awaiting the coming of the wine, namely, into the womb of the Virgin, whose love for me was more fervent than that of any other creature. This Virgin loved me and longed for me so much that there was no hour in which she did not seek me, yearning to become my handmaid. This is why she obtained the choicest wine, and this has three qualities. First it has strength, because I emerged without the contact of a man; second, a most beautiful color, for I came down in beauty from heaven on high ready to do battle; third, an excellent taste, intoxicating with the highest of blessings.

This wine, then, which I myself am, was poured inside the Virgin, so that I, the invisible God, might become visible in order to liberate the lost human race. I could well have assumed another form, but it would not have been God's justice, if form had not been given for form, nature for nature, a mode of satisfaction adapted to the mode of the offense. Which of the wise could have believed or thought that I, God almighty, would want to lower myself to such an extent I should wear the sack of human nature, but for that unfathomable love of mine because of which I wished to live visibly among men?

And because I saw the Virgin burning with such fervent love, my divine severity was overcome, and my love was shown in order to

reconcile humankind with myself. Why are you surprised? I, God, who am love itself, and who hate none of the things I have made, arranged to give humankind not only the best of gifts, but even my very self as a ransom and reward so that all proud sinners and all the devils might be confounded.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to how my divinity can encompass all things in itself, I answer: I, God, am spirit. I speak, and it is done. I command, and all obey me. I am truly he who gives being and life to all, who, before making the sky and the mountains and the earth, exist in myself, who am above and beyond all things, who am within all things, and all things are in me, and without me there is nothing. And since my Spirit blows where and when it will, and can do all things, and knows all things, and is swifter and more agile than all other spirits, possessing every power and seeing beforehand all things present, past, and future, accordingly, my Spirit, that is my divinity, is rightly incomprehensible, yet comprehends all things.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why I lay so long in the womb of the Virgin, I answer: I am the founder of all nature and have arranged for each and every nature a due measure and time and order of birth. If I, the founder of nature, had emerged from the womb as soon as I had been conceived, then I would have acted against the natural arrangement, and my taking on a human nature would have then been fantastic and unreal. Therefore, I wished to remain in the womb as long as other children, so that I, too, might fulfill my own wise arrangements of the natural order in my own case.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why I did not immediately assume the same stature at birth as I had in my thirtieth year, I answer: If I had done this, everyone would have been full of wonder and fear, following me more out of fear and because of the miracles they had seen rather than from love. And how then would the sayings of the prophets have been fulfilled? They foretold that I would be placed in a manger among animals, and adored by kings, and presented in the temple, and pursued by enemies. Therefore, in order to show that my human nature

was real and that the prophecies were fulfilled in me, my limbs grew over intervals of time, although I was as full of wisdom at the start of my birth as at the end.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to the question of why I was circumcised, I answer: Although I did not descend from Abraham through my father, yet I did so through my mother, although without sin. Therefore, because I established the law in my divine nature, I also wanted to endure it in my human nature, so that my enemies might not slander me by saying that I commanded what I myself was unwilling to fulfill.”

Answer to the sixth question. ”As to why I wanted to be baptized, I answer: Anyone who wants to found or start a new way, must lead the way for others. The ancient people were given a way of the flesh, circumcision, as a sign of obedience and future purgation. Among the faithful observers of the law, this brought about a certain effect of future grace and a promise before the coming of the promised truth, that is, before I, the Son of God, came.

With the coming of the truth, however, since the law was but a shadow, it had been eternally determined that the ancient way should fade and lose its effect. In order that the truth might appear, the shadow recede, and the way to heaven be more easily seen, I, God and man, born without sin, wished to be baptized as an example of humility for others and so that I might open up heaven for believers. As a sign of this, heaven was opened when I myself was baptized, and the voice of the Father was heard, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the likeness of a dove, and I, the Son of God, was revealed in my true humanity, so that all the faithful might know and believe that the Father opens heaven for the baptized faithful.

The Holy Spirit is present with the baptizing minister and my human nature is virtually present in the material element, but the action and the will are one and belong to the Father and to myself and to the Holy Spirit together. On the coming of the truth, that is, when I, who am Truth, came into the world, the shadow immediately disappeared, the shell of the law was broken, and the kernel appeared; circumcision ceased, and I myself

established baptism by means of which heaven is opened to young and old and the children of wrath become children of grace and eternal life.”

The fifth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and instructs her not to be anxious about the care of earthly riches and teaches her to be patient in times of trouble and to have perfect self-denial and humility.

Revelation 5

The Son of God speaks to the bride saying: "Be sure to be on your guard!" And she answers: "Why?" The Lord says to her: "Because the world is sending to you four servants who want to deceive you. The first is anxiety about riches. Tell him when he comes: 'Riches are transitory, and the more they abound, the greater the account must be given concerning them. Therefore I do not care about them, since they do not follow their owner but abandon him.'

The second servant is the loss of riches and the forfeiture of privileges conceded. Answer this servant thus: 'He who gave riches has also taken them away. He knows what is best for me. May his will be done!'

The third servant is the tribulation of this world. Tell him this: 'Blessed be you, my God, who allow me to suffer tribulation. By tribulations I know that I am yours, for you permit tribulations in the present in order that you may spare me them in the future. Grant me, then, the patience and strength to endure.'

The fourth servant is contempt and reproach. Answer them in this way: 'God alone is good and all honor is due to him. Why should there be any honor for me who have committed all kinds of bad and vile deeds? Instead I am worthy of all kinds of reproach, since my whole life has been a blasphemy to God. Or in what way is honor worth more to me than reproach? It only stirs up pride and lessens humility, and God is forgotten. Therefore may all praise and honor be given to God.'

So stand firm against the servants of the world, and love me your God with all your heart.”

Interrogation 11

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Since you are God and man, why did you not reveal your divine as well as your human nature, and then everyone would have believed in you?”

Second question. ”Why did you not let all your words be heard in an instant, and then it would not have been necessary for them to be preached over intervals of time?”

Third question. ”Why did you not perform all your works in a single hour?”

Fourth question. ”Why did your body grow over intervals of time and not in an instant?”

Fifth question. ”As your death was approaching, why did you not reveal yourself in your divine power, and why did you not show your severity to your enemies, when you said: 'All is accomplished'?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”O friend, I respond to you and yet not to you. I respond to you in order that the evil of your thoughts may be made known to others. Yet I do not respond to you, because these things are not revealed for your benefit but for the profit and warning of present and future generations. Since you do not intend to change your obstinate attitude, you will not pass from your death into my life, because, while still alive, you hate true life. Others, however, who have heard about your life, or rather your death, will pass over and fly on to my life. Indeed, it is written that, for saints, all things work together unto the good; and God permits nothing to happen without cause. So I

answer you, but not as those do who speak in a human manner, because we are discussing spiritual things, but in such a way that your thoughts and feelings may be communicated to others by way of similes.

You ask, then, why I did not show my divine nature openly as I did with my human. The reason is that my divine nature is spiritual but my human nature is bodily. Yet the divine and human natures are and were inseparable ever since they were first joined together. My divinity is uncreated, and all things that exist are made in it and through it, and every perfection and beauty is found in it. If such beauty and perfection were visibly revealed to eyes of clay, who would be able to bear the sight? Who could look upon the physical sun in all its brightness? Who would not be terrified by the sight of lightning and the sound of thunder? How much greater the terror would be if the Lord of lightning and the Creator of all things were seen in his splendor!

My divinity was not openly revealed for two reasons. The first reason is the weakness of the human body, whose substance is earthly. If any human body were to see the divinity, it would melt like wax before fire, and the soul would rejoice with such exultation that the body would be reduced, as it were, to ashes. The second reason is the immutability of divine goodness. If I were to show bodily eyes my divinity, which is incomparably more radiant than fire and sun, I would then be contradicting myself. For I have said: 'No one shall see me and live.' Not even the prophets themselves saw me as I am in my divine nature. Those who did hear the voice of my divinity and saw the burning mountain were terrified and said: 'Let Moses speak to us, and we shall listen to him.' This is why I, merciful God, in order to be understandable to humankind, revealed myself to them in a human form similar to theirs, which they could see and touch and in which the divine nature is concealed, so that people might not be terrified by a form unlike their own. Insofar as I am God, I am not bodily and cannot be portrayed in a bodily manner, but people can endure to see and hear me in my human nature."

Answer to the second question. "As to why I did not utter all my words in a single hour, I answer you: Just as it is materially impossible for

the body to take in as much food in one hour as it could manage in a large number of years, so too it goes against the divine disposition for my words, which are the food of the soul, to be spoken all in a single hour. As the food of the body is taken in a small amount at a time so that it can be chewed and then ingested, so too my words had to be uttered not in one hour but over intervals of time in proportion to the understanding of those who were to profit from them, so that the hungry might have something to fill them and then be stirred to higher things.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why I did not perform all my works in an instant, I answer: Some of those who saw me in the flesh came to belief in me, others did not. It was accordingly necessary for those who did believe to be taught by words over intervals of time and to be stirred at times by example and strengthened by works. For those who did not believe, however, it was right and just that their wicked disposition be disclosed and tolerated, as far as my divine justice could permit it. If I had performed all my works in an instant, everyone would have followed me from fear rather than from love, and, in that case, how would the mystery of human redemption have been fulfilled?

Just as in the beginnings of the world's creation all things were accomplished at different times and in different ways - although all the things to be made were immutably present together in my divine foreknowledge - so too in my human nature everything was accomplished rationally and distinctly for the salvation and edification of all.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why my body grew over a number of years and not instantaneously, I answer: The Holy Spirit, who is eternally in the Father and in me, the Son, revealed to the prophets what I would do and suffer when I came in the flesh. Accordingly, it pleased God that I should take such a body in which I could labor from morning to evening and from year to year until the last moment of death. Therefore, in order not to make the words of the prophets seem meaningless, I, the Son of God, took a body like Adam's but without sin so that I would be like those whom I was to redeem. In this way, man, who had turned away from

me, might by means of love be led back and, having died, might be raised up, and having been sold might be redeemed.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why I did not reveal my divine power and my true divine nature to everyone, when I said on the cross: 'It is accomplished,' I answer: It was necessary that everything that had been written about me should be fulfilled. Accordingly, I fulfilled them all down to the last detail. Since many things had also been predicted about my resurrection and ascension, it was necessary that they, too, should be brought about.

If my divine power had been revealed at my death, who would have dared to take me down from the cross and bury me? And it would have been a small thing for me then to come down from the cross and lay low my crucifiers - but how then would the prophecy have been fulfilled or where then would my virtue of patience have been? And if I had come down from the cross, would everyone have believed then? Would they not have said that I had done it all by evil art?

Given that they had been indignant when I raised the dead and cured the sick, they would have said much more had I come down from the cross! Therefore, in order to set the captive free, I, who was free, made myself captive; and in order to save the guilty, I, who was guiltless, stood steadfast on the cross. By my steadfastness I steadied the unsteady and strengthened the strengthless.”

The sixth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and instructs her, saying that in the spiritual life peace of mind and eternal glory are won through vigorous struggle and perseverance and humble acquiescence in the advice of an elder and by bravely resisting temptations. He offers the example of Jacob who became a servant in order to win Rachel. He says that some people experience the greatest temptations at the beginning of a conversion to the spiritual life, others in the middle or toward the end. It is therefore necessary to have a holy fear and humble perseverance in the virtues and in the struggle until the very end.

Revelation 6

The Son speaks: "It is written that Jacob became a servant for the sake of Rachel, and the days seemed short to him due to his great love, for the greatness of his love made his work easier. True, when Jacob thought he had obtained his desire, he was defrauded. Yet he went on working, because love does not make excuses for itself until it has got its wish. It is the same way in spiritual matters. Many people struggle on bravely in prayer and deeds of piety in order to gain heaven. However, just when they think they have reached the peace of contemplation, then they get entangled in temptations, and their troubles multiply, and they find themselves to be quite imperfect precisely on those points where they had thought themselves to be almost perfect. But this is nothing strange, because temptations exist that put people to the test in order to cleanse and perfect them.

Temptations accrue for some of them at the start of their conversion to the spiritual life, and such people are rendered completely sound and stable in the end. Others are more gravely tempted in the middle or toward the end, and such people should carefully examine themselves and never be presumptuous but struggle all the more vigorously. It is as Laban said: 'It is the custom to wed the older sister first,' which is to say: 'Toil and struggle first and then you will have the rest you desire.'

Therefore, my daughter, do not be surprised if temptations accrue in your old age. While you still live, you can be tempted, because the devil never sleeps and because temptation is an opportunity for perfection and keeps you from presumption. Look, I show you the example of two men. One was tempted at the beginning of his conversion but he persevered and went ahead and attained what he sought. The other experienced grave temptations in his old age that he scarcely had known in his youth. He became so entangled in these that he almost forgot everything he had known before. However, he persevered in his resolution and kept on struggling, despite feeling cold and lukewarm. Because of that, he gained his desire and peace of mind, realizing that God's judgments are hidden

and just, and that, if it had not been for those temptations, he would hardly have gained eternal salvation.”

Interrogation 12

First question. Again the monk appeared standing on his rung as before and saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why did you prefer to be born of a virgin rather than of another woman who was not a virgin?”

Second question. ”Why did you not show with a visible sign that she was a mother and a pure virgin?”

Third question. ”Why did you hide your birth so that it was known only to a very few?”

Fourth question. ”Why did you flee to Egypt because of Herod and why did you permit the innocent boys to be killed?”

Fifth question. ”Why do you permit yourself to be blasphemed and falsehood to prevail over truth?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”O friend, I preferred to be born of a virgin rather than of a woman who was not a virgin, because that which is purest befits me who am God most pure. While it remained in the order of its creation, human nature had no deformity. But once the commandment was transgressed, there immediately arose a sense of shame, just as happens to people who sin against their temporal lord, who are even ashamed of the very limbs with which they have sinned. Along with shame over the transgression, there also sprang up a disordered impulse, especially in the reproductive organs. Yet, in order that this impulse might not be unproductive, it was by God's goodness turned to good, and the act of carnal union was established by divine commandment in order that nature might bear its fruits.

However, since it brings greater glory to act above and beyond the commandment, adding whatever good one is led by love to make, it pleased God to choose for his work the institution tending to greater purity and love, and that is virginity. For it is more virtuous and generous to be in the fire of tribulation and not to burn than to be without fire and still want to be crowned.

Now, since virginity is like the fairest path to heaven while marriage is more like a road, it befitted me, God most pure, to rest in a virgin most pure. Just as the first man was created from the virgin earth, not yet polluted by blood, and because Adam and Eve committed their sin while they were still in a sound state of nature, so too I, God, wished to be received in the purest vessel so as to transform everything by my goodness.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why I did not show by open signs that my mother was mother and virgin, I answer: I intimated all the mysteries of my incarnation to the prophets, so that these mysteries might the more firmly be believed the longer ago they had been foretold. To prove that my mother was truly a virgin before and after childbirth, Joseph's testimony was sufficient, inasmuch as he was the guardian and witness of her virginity.

Even if her chasteness had been shown by a more evident miracle, unbelievers would not out of wickedness have yielded in their blasphemy. Such people do not believe that a virgin could conceive by divine power, because they do not realize that it is easier for me, God, to do this than for the sun to penetrate glass. And, of course, divine justice kept the mystery of God's incarnation hidden from the devil and from men to be revealed in the time of grace. Now, in fact, I affirm that my mother is truly mother and virgin. Just as wonderful as the divine power was in forming Adam and Eve, and just as their dwelling together was delightful and virtuous, so too there was wonderful goodness in the coming of my divinity to the virgin, for my incomprehensible divinity descended into a closed vessel without its violation. And there was a delightful cohabitation with me there,

inasmuch as I, God, who am everywhere in my divinity, was there enclosed in humanity.

Wonderful, too, was the power shown there, for I, unembodied God, left the womb embodied, yet her virginity remained intact. Therefore, since humankind is difficult about believing, while my mother is a friend to all humility, it pleased me accordingly to conceal her beauty and perfection for a time in order that my mother might deserve to be more perfectly rewarded and so that I, God, might be glorified all the more at that time when I should wish to fulfill my promises to reward the good and to punish the wicked.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why I did not disclose my birth to people in general, I answer: Although the devil lost the dignity of his first state, still he did not lose his cunning, which belongs to him for the trial of the good and for his own shame. In order that my human form might grow and reach its determined age, it was necessary to hide the mystery of my religion from the devil, because I wanted to enter hidden into combat with the devil, and because I resolved to be despised in order to overthrow human pride.

Indeed, the very teachers of the law, which they read about in their books, despised me because I came as a humble man, and, because they were proud, they did not want to hear about true justice, which comes from the faith of my redemption. They shall therefore be confounded when the 'son of perdition' comes in his pride. If I had come in the greatest power and glory, would the proud then have been humbled? Will the proud now enter heaven? Certainly not! I came as a humble man in order that the people might learn humility. And I hid myself from the proud, because they wished to understand neither my justice nor their very selves.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why I fled to Egypt, I answer: Before the commandment was transgressed, there was just one road to heaven, broad and bright. It was broad in the abundance of virtues and bright in divine wisdom and in the obedience of a good will. Once that will was changed, two roads came into being. One led to heaven, the other led

away from it. Obedience led to heaven, disobedience led astray. And as the choice between good and evil lay in the human will, that is, to obey or not to obey, people sinned whenever they willed something other than what I wanted them to will.

In order to save humankind, it was just and right that someone should come who was able to redeem them, someone who also was perfectly obedient and innocent, someone towards whom those who wished could show love and those who wished could show malice. However, it was not right for an angel to be sent to redeem humankind, because I, God, do not give my glory to others. Nor could any human person be found to appease me for his or her own sake, let alone for others. So I, God, the only Just One, came to make all just. My flight to Egypt revealed the frailty of my human nature and fulfilled a prophecy. I also set an example for those to come, because persecution should at times be avoided for God's greater glory in the future. My escape from my pursuers shows that my divine plan surpassed human plans, for it is not easy to fight against God. Furthermore, the slaying of the infants was a sign of my future passion, and a mystery of vocation and divine charity.

Although the infants themselves did not bear witness to me with their voice and mouth, yet they bore it by their death, as befitted my own infancy. Indeed it had been foreseen that the praise of God would be fulfilled even by the blood of innocents. And although the malice of the unjust fell upon them, yet my divine permission, which is always just and kind, did not expose them to it with injustice but so as to disclose human malice and the incomprehensible purpose and kindness of God. Thus, where unjust malice erupted against the boys, there merit and grace justly abounded, and where there was no verbal testimony or proper age, there bloodshed brought them the highest good."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why I permit myself to be blasphemed, I answer: It is written that when King David was avoiding his son's persecution, a certain man cursed him along the way. When his servants wanted to kill the man, David forbade them for two reasons: first, because he had a hope of returning; second, because he was mindful of his

own weakness and sin and of the ignorance of him who had cursed him as well as of the patience and goodness of God. I am David, figuratively speaking.

People persecute me with their wicked deeds, like a slave who chases his master, and they throw me out of my own kingdom, that is, out of the soul that I created and that is my kingdom. Then they find fault with me, like a criminal finds fault with his sentence, and they even blaspheme against me, because I am patient. Because I am mild, I suffer their foolishness. Because I am the Judge, I wait for them to convert until the very last moment. Finally, since people in general believe more in falsehood than in truth, and love the world more than me, their God, it is no wonder if the wicked are tolerated in their wickedness, for they wish neither to seek the truth nor to recover from their wickedness.”

The seventh revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and praises frequent confession, in order that people may not lose the grace of God that they have.

Revelation 7

The Son of God speaks: ”When there is fire in a house, a venthole is needed to let out the smoke and allow the inhabitant to enjoy the heat. Likewise, for anyone who desires to keep my spirit and my grace, habitual confession is useful in order to let out the smoke of sin. Although my divine spirit is in itself unchangeable, nevertheless it quickly withdraws from the heart that is not protected by the humility of confession.”

The eighth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride and says that the prayer of people who take their pleasure in carnal and earthly delights, neglecting heavenly desires, charity, and the memory of his passion and of eternal judgment, is like the sound of colliding stones, and they will be thrust away with loathing from God's sight like an abortion or an unclean menstrual cloth.

Revelation 8

“That man was singing: 'Deliver me, O Lord, from the unrighteous man!' His voice is in my ears like the sound of two stones struck together. His heart calls to me as if with three voices. The first says: 'I want to have my will in my own control, to sleep and to rise and to talk of pleasant things. I shall give to nature what it craves. I want money in my purse, soft clothes on my back. When I get these and similar things, I count them a greater happiness than all other gifts and the spiritual virtues of the soul.'

His second voice says: 'Death is not too hard, and the judgment is not so severe as is written; harsh threats are made as a warning, but mild punishments are given out of mercy. Therefore, so long as I can have my will in the present, let my soul make its passage as best it can in the future.'

The third voice says: 'God would not have redeemed us, if he had not wanted to give us heavenly things, nor would he have suffered, if he had not wanted to bring us back to our fatherland. Indeed, why did he suffer? Or who compelled him to suffer? Of course, I do not understand heavenly things except by hearsay, and I do not know for sure whether I should trust the Scriptures. If I could only have my will, I would have it instead of the heavenly kingdom.' You can see what that man's will is like and why his voice is like the sound of stones in my ears.

But, o friend, I answer your first voice: Your way does not tend toward heaven, nor is the passion of my love to your taste. Therefore hell lies open for you, and, because you love the low things of the earth, you will go to the regions below. I answer your second voice: Son, death will be hard for you, judgment unbearable, and flight impossible, unless you mend your ways. I tell your third voice: Brother, I did all my works out of love in order that you might become like me and so that, after having been turned away from me, you might return to me. But now my works are dead in you, my words are burdensome, and my way is neglected. What awaits you, therefore, is the torment and company of demons, because you turn your back on me, you trample underfoot the signs of my humility, and you do not consider how I stood on the cross in your sight and for your sake.

I stood there in three ways for your sake. First as a man, whose eye a dagger would penetrate; second, as a man whose heart would be pierced by a sword; third, as a man whose every limb would shake with the pain of pressing affliction. My passion indeed was more bitter to me than a puncture in the eye; yet I suffered it out of love. My mother's sorrow moved my heart more than my own, yet I bore it. All my inner and outer parts, too, shook for a long time from pressing pain and suffering, yet I did not give up nor retreat. Thus I stood in your sight, but you forget and neglect and scorn it all. You will therefore be thrust away like an abortion and a menstrual cloth."

Interrogation 13

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why is your grace withdrawn quickly from some people while others are tolerated in their wickedness for a long time?"

Second question. "Why is grace given to some people in youth, while others are deprived of it in old age?"

Third question. "Why do some people suffer excessive hardship, while others live more or less free from hardship?"

Fourth question. "Why is intelligence and an extremely quick mind given to some people, while others are like mindless asses?"

Fifth question. "Why are some people exceedingly hardened, while others enjoy wonderful consolation?"

Sixth question. "Why is more worldly success given to the wicked than to the good?"

Seventh question. "Why does one person receive his or her calling at the beginning, while another toward the end?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, all my works are from the start in my foreknowledge, and everything that has been made was created for the comfort and solace of humankind. However, since people in general prefer their own will to my will, the good things gratuitously given them are therefore justly taken away from them, so that they may know that everything concerning God is rational and just. And because many people are ungrateful for my grace and grow less devout the more gifts are given to them, the gifts are therefore soon taken away from them so as to reveal my divine purpose more quickly and so that people may not abuse my grace and receive a harsher sentence.

The reason why some people are tolerated in their wickedness for a long time is that many of them do have something tolerable to show in the midst of their evildoings. They act either as a benefit or a warning to others. Saul, for example, when he was reproached by Samuel seemed only to have sinned slightly in human eyes while David seemed to have sinned more. Yet, in that test, Saul turned disobediently from me, his God, and consulted the sorceress, whereas David grew more faithful in temptation, patiently enduring what happened and thinking it to have befallen him in return for his sins. Both Saul's ingratitude and my divine patience were revealed in my patient forbearance with him. Both my foreknowledge and David's future humility and contrition were revealed through my election of him."

Answer to the second question. "As to why grace is taken away from some people in old age, I answer: Grace is given to all in order that the giver of grace might be loved by all. Because many people are ungrateful for my divine grace toward life's end, just as Solomon was, it is right that the gifts that have not been carefully maintained before the end should be taken away at the end. The gift of my divine grace is taken away sometimes due to the recipient's negligence, because he does not consider the greatness of the gift nor what he should give in return, and sometimes as a warning to others, so that everyone in a state of grace may be ever on

guard and fearful about the fall of others. Even the wise have fallen through negligence, and even those who seemed to be my friends have been brought low because of their ingratitude.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why greater hardships are given to some, I answer: I am the maker of all things. Thus, no hardship comes without my permission, as it is written: 'I am God creating woe,' that is, permitting hardship. Hardship does not befall the heathen without me and without a reasonable cause. Indeed, my prophets made many predictions about the adversities of the heathen in order that those who had neglected and abused reason might be taught by suffering, and in order that I, God, who permitted it all, should be known and glorified by every nation. Therefore, if I, God, do not spare pagans from suffering, even less will I spare those who have tasted the sweetness of my divine grace more plentifully.

There is indeed less hardship for some and more for others in order to turn people away from sin and so that those who suffer hardships in the present might be comforted in the future. All those who are judged and who judge themselves in this age will not come into future judgment. As it is written: 'They shall pass from death into life.' There are also some that are protected from suffering, but this happens so that they do not incur a harsher judgment by grumbling at their sufferings. Many there are who do not deserve to suffer in this world.

There are also some people in this life who are afflicted neither in body nor in spirit. They pass their lives as carefree as though God did not exist, or as though God is sparing them for the sake of their righteous works. Such people should be filled with dread for fear that I, God, who spare them in the present, come suddenly and condemn them more harshly as being without contrition.

There are also those who enjoy health of body but are troubled in their soul about the contempt of God, while others enjoy neither health of body nor inner consolation of soul and yet persevere as far as they are able in my service and honor. There are others, too, who are always sick, from

their mother's womb up until their death. I, the God of all of these, regulate their sufferings so that nothing happens without cause or reward, for many people, who were asleep before their trials, have their eyes opened by suffering.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why some people are more intelligent, I answer: With regard to eternal salvation, abundant wisdom does not benefit the soul, unless she also shines with goodness of life. It is in fact more useful to have less knowledge but a better way of life. Accordingly, reason is measured out to all persons in such a way that they can gain heaven, if they lead godly lives. Yet the reasoning faculty differs in many people according to their natural and spiritual dispositions.

Just as one person succeeds through virtue and Godsent zeal in perfecting the virtues, another can likewise fall into vanities through bad will and nature's bad disposition as well as an immoral upbringing. One's nature is often damaged when one sins and struggles against nature. Therefore, it is not without cause that some people have a greater reasoning faculty but to no use, as in the case of those who have knowledge but not a corresponding way of life. Other people have less knowledge but make better use of it. In some people, moreover, there is harmony between their knowledge and way of living, while still others display neither reasoning nor a decent way of life. This variation derives at times from my ordinary divine permission (either for people's benefit or humiliation and edification), but at times it is the result of ingratitude and temptation or of a natural defect or of secret sin. Sometimes, too, it occurs in order to avoid the occasion of a greater sin or because of limited natural capacity.

Whoever, then, has the grace of greater understanding should beware of the danger of a harsher judgment if he or she is negligent. Whoever lacks understanding and intellectual brilliance should take advantage of the little he has and do what he can - for he has been saved from many occasions of sin. In youth even Peter the Apostle was forgetful, and John unlearned. Yet they grasped true wisdom in old age, for they sought the source of wisdom. Solomon was quick to learn when young, and Aristotle

had a subtle mind. However, they did not grasp the origin of wisdom, for they neither glorified the giver of wisdom, as they should have, nor put into practice what they knew and taught, nor studied in order to improve themselves but to improve others.

Balaam, too, had knowledge but did not practice it, which was why the she-ass rebuked him for foolishness. And young Daniel was the judge of his elders. Since, therefore, it is not scholarship that is pleasing to me but a good way of life, it is necessary to correct those who abuse their reasoning faculty, for I, the God and Lord of all, give knowledge to humankind, and I correct both wise and unwise.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why some people are hardened, I answer: Pharaoh's hardness of heart was his own fault, not mine, because he did not want to conform himself to my divine will. Hardness of heart is nothing other than the withdrawal of my divine grace, which is withdrawn when people do not give me, their God, their free possession, namely, their will.

You can understand this by means of a parable. There was a man who owned two fields, one of which lay fallow, while the other bore fruit at certain times. A friend of his said to him: 'I wonder why, although you are wise and rich, you do not take more care to cultivate your fields or why you do not give them to others to cultivate.' The man answered: 'One of the fields, no matter how much care I take, does not produce anything but the most useless plants that are seized by noxious animals that ruin the place.' If I fertilize it with manure, it only insults me by growing wild because, though it does produce a small amount of grain, even more weeds spring up, which I refuse to gather in, since I only want pure grain. The better plan, then, is to leave a field like that uncultivated, since then the animals do not occupy the place or hide in the grass, and, if any bitter herbs do sprout, they are useful for the sheep, because, after tasting them, the sheep learn not to be fastidious about sweeter fodder.

The other field is managed according to the nature of the seasons. Some parts of it are stony and need fertilizer; other parts are wet and need

warmth, while still others are dry and need watering. Thus I organize my work according to the different conditions of the field.' I, God, am like this man. The first field represents the free activity of the will given to man, which he uses more against me than for me. Even if man does do some things that please me, yet he provokes me in more ways, since man's will and my will are not in harmony. Pharaoh also acted in this way when, although he knew my power by means of sure signs, nevertheless he set his mind against me and continued on in his wickedness. Therefore, he experienced my justice, because it is only just that a person who does not make good use of small things should not be allowed to rejoice proudly in greater ones.

The second field represents the obedience of a good mind and the denial of self-will. If such a mind is dry in devotion, it should wait for the rain of my divine grace. If it is stony through impatience and hardheartedness, it should bear chastening and correction with equanimity. If it is wet through carnal lust, it should embrace abstinence and be like an animal alert to its owner's will. I, God, can proudly rejoice in a mind like that. The human will acting in opposition to me causes people to be hardhearted. I desire the salvation of everyone, but this cannot come about without the personal cooperation of each and every person in conforming his or her will to mine.

Furthermore, as to why grace and progress are not granted equally to all - that belongs to my hidden judgment. I know and measure out what is beneficial and appropriate to each one, and I hold people back in their designs so that they do not fall more deeply. Many people have received the talent of grace and are capable of working but refuse to do so. Others keep themselves from sin out of fear of punishment, or because they do not have the possibility of sinning, or because sin does not attract them. Thus, some are not given greater gifts, because I alone understand the human mind and know how to distribute my gifts."

Answer to the sixth question. "As to why the wicked sometimes have greater worldly success than the good, I answer: This is an indication of my great patience and love and a testing of the righteous. If I were to give

temporal goods to my friends alone, then the wicked would despair and the good would grow proud. Instead, temporal goods are granted to all, so that I, God, the giver and Creator of all things, may be loved by all and so that good people who become proud may be taught righteousness by means of the wicked. It is also in order that everyone may realize that temporal things are not to be loved or preferred to me, God, but are only to be possessed for the sake of sustenance, and in order that they may be all the more zealous in my service the less they rely on temporal possessions.”

Answer to the seventh question. ”As to why one person is called at the beginning and another toward the end, I answer: I am like a mother who, seeing the hope of life in her children, gives stronger medicine to some and lighter medicine to others. And to those for whom there is no hope, she also shows compassion and does as much as she can. But if the children just get worse from her medicine, why should she take further pains? This is the way I treat my human children. The person who is foreseen to be more fervent in resolution of will and more steadfast in humility and perseverance receives grace in the beginning, and it continues to the end. A person who struggles against vice and yearns to be better deserves to be called toward the end of life. An ungrateful person, however, does not deserve to be admitted to his mother's breast.”

The ninth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and shows her how she has already been rescued and delivered from the house of the world and of vices, and that she has already been brought to live in the mansion of the Holy Spirit. And he warns her to conform herself to that same Spirit by ever persevering in purity, humility, and devotion.

Revelation 9

The Son speaks to the bride: ”You are a woman who was raised in a poor home and entered the company of the great. In a poor home there are three things: stained walls, harmful smoke, and soot everywhere. But you have been brought to a home where there is beauty without stain, heat without smoke, charm that is everywhere and never fails to please. The

poor home represents the world. Its walls are pride, forgetfulness of God, abundance of sin, lack of forethought for the future.

These walls leave a stain, because they ruin good works and hide God's face from humankind. The smoke represents the love of this world. It harms the eyes, because it darkens the understanding of the soul and makes her anxious about trifling vanities. The soot represents lustful pleasure, because, though it may provide temporary enjoyment, it never satisfies or fills anyone up with the everlasting good. You have been taken away from these things and brought to the mansion of the Holy Spirit, who is in me and I in him, and who also encloses you within himself. It is he who is purest and fairest and most stable, for he upholds all things. Conform yourself, therefore, to the inhabitant of the house by remaining pure, humble, and devout.”

Interrogation 14

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why do animals suffer disease, though they will not obtain eternal life nor have the use of reason?”

Second question. ”Why is everything born in pain, though sin is not involved in every birth?”

Third question. ”Why does an infant carry the sin of its father, though it does not know how to sin?”

Fourth question. ”Why do unforeseen events happen so often?”

Fifth question. ”Why does a bad person die in a good death like the righteous while a righteous person sometimes dies a bad death like the unrighteous?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, your questioning does not come from love; however I answer you for the love of others. You ask why animals suffer infirmities. This is because there exists a disorder in them as in the rest of creation. I am the maker of every nature and have given to each its own temperament and order in which each one moves and lives. However, after man, for whose sake all things were made, set himself against his lover, that is, against me his God, then disorder entered all the rest of creation, and all the things that should have been afraid of man began to set themselves against him and oppose him. Because of this defective disorder many troubles and difficulties befall humankind as well as animals.

Besides, sometimes animals also suffer because of their own natural immoderation or as a curb to their ferocity, or as a cleansing of nature itself, or sometimes because of human sins in order that human beings, who have a greater use of reason, might consider how much punishment they deserve, when the creatures they love are plagued and taken away. But if human sins did not demand it, animals, which are under human charge, would not suffer in so singular a manner.

But not even they suffer without great justice. Their suffering occurs either to put a quicker end to their lives and lessen their wretched toils that consume their strength or on account of a change in seasons or out of human carelessness during the process of work. People should therefore fear me, their God, above all things, and treat my creatures and animals more mildly, having mercy on them for the sake of me, their Creator. I, God, accordingly decreed the Sabbath rest, because I care for all my creation."

Answer to the second question. "As to why everything is born in pain, I answer: When humankind rejected the fairest pleasure, they immediately incurred a life of toil. And because the disorder began in and through humankind, my justice causes there to be some bitterness even for other creatures, which exist for the sake of humans, so as to temper their pleasure and foster their means of nourishment. For this reason, people are born with pain and make toilsome progress in order to render them eager

to hurry to their true rest. They die naked and poor in order to make them restrain their disorderly behavior and fear the coming examination.

Likewise animals, too, give birth in pain in order for bitterness to temper their excesses, and so that they may be participants in human toil and sorrow. For this reason, insofar as humankind is so much nobler than are animals, people should love me, the Lord God, their Creator, all that much more fervently.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why a child carries the sins of his father, I answer: Can anything clean come from that which is unclean? When he lost the beauty of innocence due to disobedience, the first man was thrown out of the paradise of joy and was enveloped in unclean things. There is no one to be found who can regain this innocence by himself. For this reason, I, merciful God, appeared in the flesh and instituted baptism, by means of which a child is freed from perverse uncleanness and sin. Because of this, a son shall not carry the weight of his father's sin, but each shall die in his own sin.

However it often happens that children imitate the sins of their parents. Sometimes, too, the fathers' sins are punished in their children, not because their fathers' sins go unpunished in the fathers themselves, although the punishment for sins may be put off for a time. Rather, each shall die in and be punished for his own sin. As it is written, the sins of fathers are also sometimes visited upon the fourth generation, because it is my divine justice that, when sons do not try to placate my wrath either for themselves or for their fathers, they should be punished along with their fathers whom they followed against me.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why unforeseen events often happen, I answer: It is written that a man shall be punished by the very things in which he has sinned. Who can fathom God's purpose? Given that many people seek me not in accordance with knowledge but for the sake of the world, some of them having more fear than is right, others taking too much for granted, still others being proud in their own counsel, I, God, working for the salvation of all, sometimes bring about that which people

fear most. At times that which is loved more than is right is taken away, while at other times things that are sought and desired overanxiously are delayed, so that people may fear, love, and acknowledge me as their God always and above all things.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why a bad person dies a good death like the righteous, I answer: The wicked sometimes have some good to them and perform some works of justice, and for these they must be rewarded in the present life. Likewise, the righteous do bad things at times, and for these they must receive punishment in the present or they must expect it. As everything in the present life is uncertain, and all things are left to the future, and as there is only one entrance for everyone, so there must also be only one exit for everyone, though it is not the manner of their exit but that of their life that makes people blessed.

When wicked people make the same kind of exit as the righteous, it is because of my divine justice, because they themselves desired that exit. Sometimes the devil, foreseeing the exit of his friends, announces to them beforehand the time of their death with a view to their vainglory and presumption and deception (as one finds in the so-called apocryphal books) so that they may receive the fame of righteousness after death.

On the other hand, a sorrowful death sometimes occurs to the righteous with a view to their greater reward in order that those who were always concerned about virtue in their lifetime might be free to fly to heaven through an ignominious death, inasmuch as no offscourings to cleanse can be found in them.

It is written that the lion killed the disobedient prophet but guarded the corpse without eating it. That the lion kills the body - what else does it imply if not my divine permission that allows the disobedience of the prophet to be punished? The fact that the lion did not eat the body was a proof of the good works of the prophet, so that, purged in the present, he would be found righteous in the life to come. Let everyone therefore be wary of analyzing my decisions. For, even as I am incomprehensible in virtue and power, so too I am terrible in my judgments and counsels. And,

indeed, some people, wishing to comprehend me in their wisdom, have been cut off from their hope.”

The tenth revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ speaks to the bride and warns her not to be disturbed if the divine words he has given her in revelations sometimes seem obscure or doubtful or uncertain. This is due to certain reasons explained here or because of God's hidden justice. He advises her, however, always to await the results and promises of his words with patience and fear and perseverance in humility, in order not to lose the promised grace because of ingratitude. He also says that many things have been expressed in a corporeal fashion that will not be effected corporally but spiritually.

Revelation 10

The Son speaks to the bride: ”Do not be disturbed if I express one thing more obscurely, and another more plainly; or if I now call someone my servant or son and friend and then he turns out to be the opposite. My words can be interpreted in diverse ways: just as I told you of one man, that his hand would be his death, or of another, that he would no longer approach my table. These things are said either because I am going to tell you why I said it or because you will see how the truth turns out in actual fact, as is clear from the two cases just mentioned. Sometimes I also say things in an obscure way, so that you may feel both fear and joy - fear in case they should turn out differently because of my divine patience (for I know how hearts change) but also joy because my will is always fulfilled.

So too, in the Old Law, I said many things that should be understood spiritually rather than corporally, for example, concerning the temple and David and Jerusalem - in order that carnal men might learn to desire spiritual things. In order to test the constancy of faith and conscientiousness of my friends, I said and promised many things that could - according to the different effects of my Spirit - be understood in different ways by good and bad.

This was also done so that individuals in different states of life might have occasion to be trained and tested and formed by me. It is due to my justice that some things have been said in an obscure way, in order that my plan might remain hidden and so that each person might patiently await my grace and avoid becoming lukewarm while waiting - which might have happened if my plan had always been indicated with a definite date. I have also promised many things that have been taken back because of human ingratitude. Many things, too, have been expressed corporeally but effected spiritually, for example, concerning Jerusalem and Zion. For, as it is written, the Jews are the blind and deaf People of the Lord."

Interrogation 15

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why are many things created that seem to be of no use?"

Second question. "Why are souls not commonly seen either remaining in the body or going out of it?"

Third question. "Why are the prayers of your friends not always heard?"

Fourth question. "Why are many people who want to do evil not allowed to do it?"

Fifth question. "Why does evil happen to some people who do not deserve it?"

Sixth question. "Why do those who have God's Spirit sin?"

Seventh question. "Why does the devil stay close to some people and is continuously with them but never with others?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, just as my works are many, so they are also wonderful and unfathomable. Yet none of them, many though they are, is without a purpose. Truly, humankind is like a child brought up in a dark prison. If he were told of the existence of light and stars, he would not believe it, because he has never seen it. Likewise, after the human race had abandoned the true light, it did not delight in anything but darkness, as the saying goes: 'a person who grows accustomed to evil learns to like it.' Therefore, while human intellect may be darkened, yet there is no shadow or change in me. I arranged and continue to arrange all things in so orderly, wise, and honest a fashion that nothing has been made without cause or use - not the highest mountain nor the desert or the lakes, nor even beasts or poisonous reptiles.

Just as I provide for humanity, so I provide for the needs of other creatures. I am like a man who reserves some places for strolling, others for the storage of utensils and tools, others for keeping both tame and wild animals, others for fortifications and secret councils, others adapted for the proper use of land, still others for the correction of humankind. Thus I, God, have arranged all things in a rational way, some for human use and enjoyment, others for the various haunts of wild beasts and birds, some to discipline and curb human greed, others for the meeting of the elements, some for the admiration of my works, others for the punishment of sinners and the meeting of higher and lower beings, and still others for a cause known and reserved to me alone.

Look, a small, puny bee knows how to draw on many sources for the making of honey; so too other tiny or large creatures surpass human beings in cleverness both in recognizing herbs and in considering their own advantage; and there are many things that are useful for them but harmful for humans. What wonder is it then that man's wits are slow to discern and understand my wonders, when he is surpassed even by the least of creatures? Look, what is nastier than a frog or snake, or what is more contemptible than a burr or a stinging nettle or the like? And yet those things are very good for those who can understand my works. And so whatever exists has some usefulness in it, and every thing that has motion understands how its nature can survive and grow strong.

Therefore, given the wonder of my works and how all things praise me, human beings, who are so much more beautiful and so much more highly placed than other creatures, should accordingly realize that they are that much more obliged to honor me. If the onrush of the waters were not repressed by the mountain boundaries, where would people dwell in safety? And if animals had no place of refuge, how would they escape insatiable human greed? And if people got all their wishes, would they then yearn for heaven? If animals did not toil or live in fear, they would grow weak and perish. Thus, most of my work is hidden, so that people will recognize and honor me, God, wonderful and unfathomable, out of wonderment at my wisdom in creating so many creatures.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why one cannot see souls, I answer: The soul is far better by nature than the body, because it is of my divine power and is immortal, having fellowship with the angels and being more excellent than all the planets and nobler than the whole world. And because the soul is of a most noble and fiery nature, giving life and warmth to the body, and because it is spiritual, it can in no way be seen by bodies except through bodily images.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why my friends who ask me for something in prayer are not always heard by me, I answer: I am like a mother who sees her son asking for something against his health and puts off granting his request, checking his tears with a display of indignation. This indignation is not anger but great mercy. In the same way I, God, do not always hear my friends, because I see what is needful to their health better than they do themselves.

Did not Paul and others pray efficaciously and yet were not heard? But why? It is because my friends have defects in the midst of an abundance of virtues and aspects that need to be cleansed, and, therefore, their prayers are not heard. This is in order that they might grow all the more humble and zealous toward me the more lovingly they are kept unharmed and are defended by me in temptations of sin. It is therefore a great sign of loves that my friends are not always heard in their prayers,

since it is for the sake of their greater reward and as a test of their perseverance.

Just as the devil tries, if he can, to spoil the life of the righteous through sin or an ignominious death, in order to weaken the perseverance of the faithful, so too it is not without cause that I permit the righteous to be tested, in order that their steadfastness may become known to others and so that they may receive a more sublime crown. And just as the devil is not ashamed to tempt his own people, when he sees that they are very quick to sin, so too, for a time, I do not spare my chosen people when I see that they are ready for every good action.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why some who wish to do evil are not allowed, I answer: If a father has two sons, one obedient and the other disobedient, he opposes his disobedient son as much as he can so that his son does not sin in his wickedness. He tests the obedient son, however, and encourages him on to greater things in such a way as to encourage even the disobedient son by the example of the other son's readiness. And so I often do not allow the wicked to sin, because, in between their wicked acts, they do some good, and either benefit themselves or others. Justice accordingly demands that they should not be immediately handed over to the devil nor always be allowed to carry out their wishes.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why bad things happen to people who do not deserve them, I answer: I alone, God, know all who are good and what each one deserves. Many things seem indeed to be beautiful but are not. Moreover, gold is tested by fire. Consequently, the righteous sometimes experience difficulties so that they may give good example to others and earn their crown. Job was tested in this way, for he was good before his afflictions, but during and after his afflictions he was recognized as even more so. Yet, as to why I afflicted him, who can examine it? Who can know it but I myself, who blessed him early on and kept him from sin and sustained him in his trials? Just as I blessed him beforehand with my grace without any merits of his own, so too I tested him with justice and mercy, for no one is made just in my sight except by my grace.”

Answer to the sixth question. "As to why those who have my Spirit sin, I answer: The Spirit of my divinity is not tied down but blows where it will and withdraws when it will. It does not dwell in a vessel that is subject to sin but only in one that has love. I, God, am love and where I am, there is freedom. Accordingly, those who receive my spirit can still sin, if they want, for every human being has free will. And when people set their will against me, my Spirit, which is in them, withdraws from them, or otherwise they are rebuked in order that they may correct their will.

Balaam wished to curse my people but I did not let him. Although he was a bad and greedy prophet, yet sometimes he said something good, not of himself but through my Spirit. Often the gift of my Spirit is given to both the good and the wicked. Otherwise, those great and eloquent teachers would not have been able to dispute of such high things if they had not had my Spirit; and they would not have raved on so foolishly, if they had not turned their senses against me and fell into pride, wanting to know more than they should."

Answer to the seventh question. "As to why the devil stays closer and is always with some people, I answer: The devil is like an executioner and a tester of the righteous. By my permission he torments some people's souls, darkens the conscience of others, and torments even the bodies of others. He torments the souls of those who, sinning against reason, subject themselves to every kind of impurity and infidelity. He disturbs the consciences and bodies of those who are tormented and cleansed for certain sins in this world. These torments also occur to children of either sex, both to pagans and Christians, either due to the carelessness of the parents or to a defect of nature or to instill fear and humility in certain people or because of certain sins. But my justice mercifully disposes that such as these who do not have occasion to sin either are not harshly punished or receive a more sublime crown.

Many such things also occur to brute beasts either for the punishment of others or for a sooner end to their lives or because of some imbalance in their nature. Therefore it is by my permission that the devil sticks closer to some people and is nearer to them, either for their greater humility and as a

warning, or because of their greater crown and their solicitude in seeking me, or in order to purge sins in the present life, or because some people deserve a punishment that begins in the present and lasts forever.”

The eleventh revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and tells her why and when he began to give her and pour into her the words of the divine revelations in spiritual vision. And he tells her that these words of the revelations, which are contained in these books, have principally these four virtues: they are spiritually satisfying to anyone thirsting for true love, they warm the cold, they cheer the troubled, and they heal sick souls.

Revelation 11

The Son of God speaks: "A wholesome drink can be made with natural means, such as cold iron and hard stone, a dry tree and a bitter herb. But how? Well, if steel were to fall heavily upon a sulfurous mountain, then fire would come out of the steel and ignite the mountain. Its heat would cause an olive tree planted nearby, which is dry on the outside but is full of oil inside, to begin to flow so abundantly that even bitter herbs planted at the foot of the olive tree would grow sweet, and then a wholesome drink could be made from them.

This is a spiritual allegory of what I have done for you. Your heart was as cold as steel toward my love, and yet a small spark of love for me was stirred up in it when you began to think of me as worthy of all love and honor. But that heart of yours then fell upon a sulfurous mountain, when the glory and delight of the world turned against you and when your husband, whom you loved above all others in the flesh, was taken away from you in death.

In truth, lusty pleasure and worldly delight are well compared to a sulfurous mountain, since they have within themselves the swelling of the spirit and the stench of concupiscence and the fire of punishment. And when your soul was gravely pierced with disturbance at the death of your husband, then the spark of my love, which lay as though hidden and

enclosed, began to go forth, for, having considered the vanity of the world, you surrendered your whole will to me and desired me above all things. Because of that spark of love, you developed a taste for the dry olive tree, that is, for the words of the Gospels and the discourse of those learned men of mine, and abstinence so pleased you that everything that previously seemed bitter began to become sweet for you.

And when the olive tree began to flow and the words of my revelations came down upon you in Spirit, somebody standing on the mountain cried out, saying: 'By this drink thirst is slaked, the cold are warmed, the troubled are cheered, the infirm recover.' I myself, God, am the one who cries out. My words, which you hear from me frequently in spiritual vision, are like a good drink satisfying to those who thirst for true love; second, they warm the cold; third, they cheer the troubled; fourth, they heal those who are weak in soul."

Interrogation 16

First question. Again the monk appeared as before standing on his rung and saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does the gospel say that the goats are placed on your left, the sheep on your right? Do you really delight in such things?"

Second question. "Since you are the Son of God, equal to the Father, why is it written that neither you nor the angels knows the hour of judgment?"

Third question. "If your Holy Spirit has spoken through the evangelists, why is there so much variance in the Gospels?"

Fourth question. "Since your incarnation was so important for the salvation of the human race, why did you delay so long in becoming incarnate?"

Fifth question. "Since the human soul is so much better than the world, why do you not send your friends and preachers always and everywhere?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, you do not ask in order to know but so as to let your wickedness be known. There is surely nothing of flesh or represented by flesh in my divinity, for my divinity is Spirit. Nor can the good and the wicked live together in me, no more than light can coexist with darkness. There is neither right and left in my divinity, as the physical image portrays it, nor are those on my right happier than those on the left, but this is all said figuratively.

By 'right hand' is understood the sublimity of my divine glory, by 'left hand' the lack and privation of all good. Furthermore, sheep or goats are not to be found in that wondrous glory of mine, where nothing is found that is bodily and soiled or changeable. Rather, human characters are often described by means of comparisons and by symbols of animals; for example, innocence is signified by sheep, impurity by goats. In other words, the incontinent man is signified as placed on the left, where there is a lack of all good. You should understand that I, God, sometimes make use of human words and similes so that the little child may have something to suck on, and so that the perfect may become more perfect. It is also to fulfill the Scripture that says that the Virgin's Son has been placed as a sign of contradiction so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed."

Answer to the second question. "As to why I, the Son of God, said that I do not know the hour of judgment, I answer: It is written that Jesus progressed in age and wisdom. Anything that progresses and regresses is changeable; but the deity is unchangeable. Thus I, the Son of God, coeternal with the Father, progressed in the sense that I did so in my human nature. What I did not know was what my humanity did not know, but, according to my divine nature, I both knew and know all things. For the Father does nothing unless I, the Son, also do it. Can the Father know anything unknown to me, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Of course not. But the Father alone, with whom I, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one

substance, one deity, and one will, knows the hour of the judgment, and not the angels nor any other creature.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why, if the Holy Spirit has spoken through them, there is so much variance among the evangelists, I answer: It is written that the Holy Spirit is various in his operations in that he distributes his gifts to his chosen people in varied ways. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is like a man with a balance in his hand, measuring and balancing the scales until the balance reaches equilibrium and comes to rest. A balance is handled in different ways by a person who is used to it and by one who is unused to it, by one who is strong and by one who is weak.

So the Holy Spirit now rises like a balance in human hearts, and then sinks again. He rises when he uplifts the mind through keenness of understanding and through the soul's devotion and through the inflaming of spiritual desire. He sinks when he allows the mind to fall into difficulties and to be anxious about trifling vanities and upset by tribulation. Therefore, just as the balance cannot reach equilibrium unless the weights are adjusted, and it is controlled by a guiding hand, so too measure and a good life, a simple intention, and discretion in works and virtues are necessary for the operation of the Holy Spirit.

When I, the Son of God, visible in the flesh, preached different things in different places, I had different kinds of followers and listeners. Some followed me out of love, others in order to have an occasion for fault finding or out of curiosity. Some of my followers had a keener intellect, others a simpler. Accordingly, I spoke simply to instruct the simple. I also spoke deeply to awaken the wonder of the wise. Sometimes I spoke darkly in parables, which gave some people an occasion for commenting. At other times I repeated things said earlier and sometimes added to or simplified them. So it is no wonder that those who arranged the gospel narrative recorded different but still true things, for some of them wrote it down word for word, others captured the sense but not the exact words. Some wrote things they had heard but not seen; others placed earlier events later;

others wrote more about my divinity; yet all of them as the Spirit gave them to speak.

However, I want you to know that only those evangelists are to be accepted whom the church accepts. Many people attempted to write who had zeal but not in accordance with my knowledge. Recall what I said in today's reading: 'Destroy this temple and I shall rebuild it.' Those who testified to what they heard were truthful regarding the words they heard, but they were false witnesses because they did not consider the sense of my words, for I spoke concerning my body. Likewise when I said: 'Unless you eat my flesh, you shall not have life.' Many hearers went away, because they did not consider the conclusion that I added: 'My words are spirit and life, that is, they have a spiritual meaning and force. It is not remarkable that they went astray, inasmuch as they did not follow me out of love. Thus the Holy Spirit rises in human hearts like a balance, at one time speaking corporeally, at another spiritually. And he sinks when the human heart is hardened against God or falls into heresies or worldliness and is darkened.'

At that moment the Judge said to the monk who sat questioning him on the rung of the ladder: "Friend, you have posed subtle questions to me several times already. Now, for the sake of my bride who is standing here, I ask you: Why does your soul, which can understand and distinguish between good and bad, love perishable things rather than heavenly ones and does not live in accord with its understanding?" The monk replied: "Because I act against reason and allow my bodily senses to prevail over reason." And Christ said: "Then your conscience shall be your judge."

Then Christ said to the bride: "See, daughter, how great the effects in the man are not only of the malice of the devil but also of a deformed conscience! And this comes about because he does not struggle against temptation as he ought. But the master known to you did not act in this way. Indeed the Spirit sank in him, tempting him to such an extent that it seemed as if all the heresies stood before him and said with one mouth: 'We are the truth: But he did not trust his thoughts and did not think beyond himself. For that reason he was rescued and became

knowledgeable all the way from 'In the beginning' to the 'alpha and omega: just as it was promised to him.'"

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why I delayed so long in becoming incarnate, I answer: My incarnation was indeed necessary, for through it the curse was lifted and all things were reconciled in heaven and on earth. Yet it was necessary for people to be instructed first by natural law, and then by written law. Through natural law it became clear what human love was and how much it was worth. Through the written law humankind understood its weakness and wretchedness and began to seek medicine.

It was right for the doctor to come just when the sickness was raging, so that where disease abounded, the medicine might even more abound. There were also many righteous people under the dispensations of natural law and of written law, and many who had the Holy Spirit and made many predictions and instructed others in all virtue, and awaited me, the Savior. These approached my mercy, not everlasting punishment."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why, given that the human soul is better than the world, preachers are not sent always and everywhere, I answer: The soul is indeed worthier and nobler than all the world, and more lasting than all things. The soul is more worthy, because she is a spiritual creature like the angels and made for eternal joy. She is more noble because she was made in the image of my divinity, both immortal and eternal. Because humankind is worthier and nobler than all creatures, the human race should live more nobly as having been endowed with reason beyond all the rest. If they abuse their reason and my divine gifts, what wonder is it if, at the time of judgment, I punish that which had been overlooked in the time of mercy?

So preachers are not sent always and everywhere, because I, God, foreseeing the hardness of many hearts, spare my chosen ones the trouble, so that they need not work in vain. And because many, deliberately sinning with full knowledge, decide to persevere in sin rather than to be converted, they are not worthy to hear the messengers of salvation.

But now, my friend, I shall end my response to your thoughts here and you shall end your life. Now you shall see what good your wordy eloquence and human favor can do for you. O how happy you would have been if you had attended to your profession and vow!”

Then the Spirit said to the bride: ”Daughter, this man, whom you saw asking so many questions - and such questions - still lives in the flesh but will not remain alive for one day more. The thoughts and affections of his heart were revealed to you in likenesses, not for his greater disgrace, but for the salvation of other souls. And now his hope and life shall be ended together with his thoughts and affections.”

The twelfth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and tells her that she should not be troubled by the fact that he does not immediately do justice in the case of a man who is a great sinner. For he defers the sentence of justice in order that the justice to be done in this case might be manifested to others. He also says that his divine words in this book of the Heavenly Revelations must first grow to full ripeness and bear fruit and, afterward, produce their effect and force in the world. These words are like oil in a lamp, that is, in a virtuous soul, in which the soul is steeped and made to burn and shine with a wonderful splendor with the coming of the Holy Spirit. He also adds that the words of the revelations shall first rise up and bear fruit elsewhere than in the kingdom of Sweden, which is where they began to be divinely revealed to the same bride.

Revelation 12

The Son of God speaks: ”Why are you troubled because I put up with that man so patiently? Do you not know that it is a grave thing to burn eternally? I put up with him therefore to the very last moment so that through him my justice might be manifested to others. Wherever dye-plants are sown, if they are cut down before their time, they cannot be used for dyeing as well as when they are cut at the proper time. My words, which are to be manifested with justice and mercy, should in the same way

grow and bear fruit until they are fully ripe, and then they will suit the object to which they are applied better and will color my virtue suitably.

But why are you troubled because that man does not put trust in my words without having the evidence of clearer signs? Did you give birth to him or do you know his inner life as I do? This man is indeed like a lamp that burns and shines. As soon as tallow is added to it, the wick joins and sticks to it. He is thus a lamp of virtues, a lamp fit to receive my divine grace. As soon as my words are poured into him, they liquefy fully and penetrate into his inmost heart. Is it any wonder that the tallow liquefies when there is a fire burning in the lamp that liquefies it and keeps the lamp burning?

This is truly the fire of my Spirit, which is within you and speaks to you, and this same Spirit is also within him and speaks to him, although in a more hidden and, for him, more useful way. This fire kindles the lamp of his heart to labor in my honor. It also kindles his soul so as to receive the suet of my grace and my words that sweetly sustain and more fully fatten the soul when it comes to deeds.

Therefore, do not fear but persevere steadfast in faith! If these words came from your own spirit or the spirit of this world, then you would be right to tremble. But because they are from my Spirit, the same as the holy prophets had, you should not fear but rejoice, unless you are more afraid of a vain worldly reputation than you are of the postponement of my divine words.

Listen further to what I say. This kingdom is mingled with great and long unpunished sin. This is why my words cannot yet shoot up and bear fruit here, as I will explain to you by means of a comparison. If the kernel of a nut were planted in the earth and a heavy object were placed on top that prevented it from shooting up, then the nut, being of a good and fresh nature and unable to shoot up because of the weight on top that presses down on it, searches about in the earth for a less heavily weighed-down place where it can shoot up.

There it takes deep and stable root so as not only to produce the fairest fruit but also to break through every impediment with the strength of the trunk that grows up, spreading itself over everything that was weighing it down. This kernel symbolizes my words that cannot yet shoot up properly in this kingdom on account of the pressure of sin. They shall shoot up and bear fruit first elsewhere, until the hardness of the earth in this kingdom is broken up and mercy uncovered.”

The thirteenth revelation in the Book of Questions in which God the Father speaks to blessed Bridget and instructs her deeply concerning the power of the five sacred places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and about the grace received by pilgrims visiting those places with devout humility and true love. He says that in these places there was a vessel that was closed and not closed, a lion born that was seen and was not seen, a lamb shorn and not shorn, a snake placed that lay and did not lay, and where there was also an eagle that flew and did not fly. He explains all these images. There follows an explanation and clarification of the meaning of the imagery.

Revelation 13

God the Father speaks: "There was a lord whose servant said to him: 'See, your fallow-land has been plowed and the roots have been pulled out. When will the wheat be sown?' The lord answers him: 'Although the roots look like they have been pulled out, there still remain some old stubble and stumps that will be loosened in the spring by rain and wind. Therefore wait patiently until sowing time comes!' The servant answers: 'What shall I do then between spring and harvest?' The lord says: 'I know five places. All those who go to them receive fivefold fruit, if they come pure and empty of pride and burning with love.'

In the first place there was a vessel closed and not closed, a vessel small and not small, a vessel bright and not bright, a vessel empty and not empty, a vessel clean and not clean. In the second place a lion was born that was seen and not seen, heard and not heard, touched and not touched, acknowledged and unknown, held and not held. In the third place there was a lamb that was shorn and not shorn, a lamb wounded and not

wounded, a lamb crying and not crying, a lamb suffering and not suffering, a lamb dying and not dying.

In the fourth place a snake was placed that lay and did not lay, moved and did not move, heard and did not hear, saw and did not see, sensed and did not sense. In the fifth place there was an eagle that flew and did not fly, came to a place from which it had never departed, rested and did not rest, was renewed and was not renewed, rejoiced and did not rejoice, was honored and was not honored.”

Explanation and clarification of the above images. The Father speaks: ”That vessel about which I told you was Mary, daughter of Joachim, mother of Christ's humanity. She was a vessel closed and not closed: closed to the devil but not to God. Just as a stream desiring but unable to enter a vessel that stands in its way seeks other entries and outlets, so the devil, like a stream of vices, desired with all his stratagems to get near the heart of Mary. But he was never able to incline her spirit to the least little sin, for she was closed for his temptation, since the stream of my Spirit had flowed into her heart and filled her with a special grace.

Second, Mary, the mother of my Son, was a vessel small and not small: small and modest in the humility of her lowliness, but great and not small in my divine love. Third, Mary was a vessel empty and not empty: empty of every lust and sin, not empty but full of heavenly sweetness and every goodness. Fourth, Mary was a vessel bright and not bright: bright, since every soul is created beautiful by me, but the soul of Mary grew to such a perfection of light that my Son settled down in her soul, in the beauty of which heaven and earth rejoiced. But this vessel was not bright among men in that she scorned the honors and riches of the world.

Fifth, Mary was a vessel clean and not clean: truly clean because she is all beautiful, and there was not so much uncleanness in her as to fit on the point of a needle. But the vessel was not clean in the sense that she came from the race of Adam and was born of sinners, though she herself was conceived without sin in order that my Son might be born of her

without sin. So whoever comes to that place where Mary was born and reared will not only be cleansed but will become a vessel for my honor.

The second place is Bethlehem where my Son was born like a lion. He was seen and held in his human nature, but was invisible and unknown in his divine nature.

The third place is Calvary where my Son was wounded and died like an innocent lamb according to his human nature, but remained impassible and immortal according to his divine nature.

The fourth place was the garden where my Son's grave was, and where his human nature was placed like a contemptible snake and lay there, though he was everywhere according to his divine nature.

The fifth place was the Mount of Olives from which my Son flew in his human nature like an eagle to heaven where he ever was according to his divine nature. He was renewed and rested according to his human nature although he was always at rest and always the same according to his divine nature.

Therefore, whoever comes clean and with a good and perfect intention to these places will see and taste the sweetness and goodness of me, God.

And when you come to these places I will show you more.”

Book 6

We don't have all chapters in Book 6 yet.

Our Lord tells Saint Bride by example that nothing pleases God so much as that he be loved above all things.

Chapter 50

The Mother of God speaks to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bride, and says: 'Nothing pleases God so much as that man love him above all things. See, I shall tell you by the example of a heathen woman who knew nothing of the Christian faith; but she thought thus to herself: 'I know', she says, 'of what matter I am, and how I came to be in my mother's womb. I believe also that it is impossible for me to have a body, joints, bowels, and senses, unless someone had given these to me. And therefore there is some creator and maker who made me so fair a person of mankind, and would not make me as foul as worms and serpents.

Therefore it seems to me that though I had many husbands, if they all called me, I should rather go at one call from my maker than at the calling of them all. I have also many sons and daughters, yet if I see them with food in their hands and I know that my maker was hungry, truly I would take away the food from my children's hands and gladly give it to my maker. I have also many possessions which I dispose of at my own will. Yet if I knew the will of my maker, I would most desire to leave my own will and dispose of them according to his praise'.

But see, daughter, what God did with this heathen woman. Truly, he sent his friend to her, who informed her in the holy faith. And God himself visited her heart, and you may well understand by the woman's words, for when that man of God preached to her that there was one God without beginning and end who is the Creator of all things, she answered: 'It is well

to be believed, that he who made me and all things has no maker above him. And it is likely true that his life is everlasting who could give me life'.

When this woman heard that the same Creator took mankind of a Virgin and preached with his own mouth, she answered: 'It is well to believe all virtuous works are of God. But, Friend of God, tell me what are the words that come from my Creator? For I will leave my own will and obey his according to all his words'.

Then, the Friend of God preaching to her of his Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection, she answered with weeping eyes and said: 'Blessed is that God who so patiently showed his charity on earth that he had for us in heaven. Therefore if I have loved him first, for he made me, now I am much more bound to love him, for he showed me the right way and bought me with his holy blood. I am also bound to serve him with all my might and all my limbs, for he bought me with all his limbs. And furthermore, I am bound to put away from me all my own will and desire that I previously had for my goods, possessions, children, family relations and friends, and only to desire my Creator in his bliss and in that life that never ends' ”.

Then said the Mother of God: ”See, daughter, this woman obtained a many fold reward for her love, and so is each day reward given to each one after that time that God had lived in this world”.

This is a revelation sent to the holy spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, in which our Lady Saint Mary reproached the pride of women in their stance, bearing, speech, dress, and other behavior, with the example of three wretched women: of which one was in Hell, another in Purgatory, and the third, alive.

Chapter 52

The holy spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, spoke to our Lord Jesus Christ words of love and praise for the great grace that he shaped with her, and said: ”Praise to you, almighty God, for all the things that have been

made, and praise for all your virtues. Service be rendered to you by all creatures for your great love and charity. I, therefore, always unworthy and sinful from my childhood, thank you, my God, that you do not deny grace to any sinner who asks for it. But you spare and have mercy for all. O my sweetest God, it is truly marvelous that you work with me; for when it pleases you, you bring my body into a spiritual sleep, and then you excite and raise up my soul to see and hear and feel spiritual things.

O my most sweet God, how sweet have been your words to my soul, which swallows them as the most sweet food. And then enter with joy into my heart, for when I hear your words, I am both full and hungry; full, because nothing delights me except your words; hungry, because the more I hear them the more fervently I want them. Therefore, blissful God, give me help always to do your will”.

Our Lord Jesus Christ answered and said: "I am without beginning and without end. And all things which are made by my power; all things are disposed by my wisdom and all things are governed by my judgement and will; and all my works are ordered by charity. Therefore for me there is nothing that is impossible. But that heart is over-hard which neither loves me nor fears me, since I am ruler of all things and Judge. And yet man fulfills the will rather of the devil, who is my tormentor and a deceiver, who gives out venom largely through the world, for which souls may not live, but they are drowned down into the death of Hell. This venomous sin, which, though it is bitter to the soul, yet to many tastes sweet, and each day it is drawn out of the devil's hand upon many people.

But who ever heard any such things, that life is offered to all, and they choose death rather than life. Nevertheless I, God of all, am patient and have compassion on their wretchedness. For I do as a king who sends wine to his servants and says: 'Pour it forth to many, for it is wholesome. It gives health to the sick, mirth to them who are depressed, and a courageous heart to those who are whole.' But yet the wine is not sent but by an appropriate vessel. So I have sent my words, which are like wine, to my servants by you, who are my vessel, which I will fill and draw out after my own will. My Holy Spirit shall teach you where you will go and what you shall say.

Therefore speak joyfully and without fear the things that I order; for there is no one who shall prevail against me”.

Then answered the spouse, Saint Bridget: ”O king of all glory and bliss, giver of all wisdom and granter of all virtues, why do you choose me for such work, who has wasted my body in sins? I am like a donkey, unlearned and unwise and defective in virtues; and I have trespassed in all things and amended nothing”.

Our Lord Jesus Christ answered: ”If money or other metal were presented to a lord, who should marvel, though he made of it for himself crowns or rings or coins to his own profit. So it is no marvel though I receive the hearts of my friends presented to me and do my will in them. And just as much as one has less understanding and another more, so do I use the conscience of each as is expedient to my praise. For the heart of a rightful man is my money; therefore be firm and ready to do my will”.

Then spoke the Mother of God to Saint Bridget, saying: ”What do the proud women say in your kingdom?” Saint Bridget answered: ”O Lady, I am one of them, and therefore I am ashamed to speak in your presence”. ”Though I know it better than you, yet I would hear it from you”.

Saint Bridget answered: ”When”, she said, ”true humility was preached to us, we said that our ancestors willed to us and gave us in heritage great possessions and a good education as to behavior and class. Why therefore should I not follow them? My mother sat with the first and the highest and was clad and arrayed nobly, having many servants and educating them with praise. Why should I not also pass on such things to my daughter, who has learned to bear herself nobly and to live with bodily joy and to die with great praise from the world?”

The Mother of God answered: ”Each woman who has these words and follows them in deed goes by the true way to Hell. And therefore such an answer is very difficult. What does it profit to have such words, when the Creator of all things suffered his body to live and dwell on earth in all humility from the time of his birth until his death, and never wore upon

himself the clothing of pride. Truly, such women do not consider his face, how he stood living and dead upon the cross, bloody and pale from pain; nor those who reckon nothing of the criticism which he heard, nor of his despicable death which he chose; neither have they in mind the place where he gave up the spirit, for where thieves and robbers had received many wounds, there was my Son wounded.

And I, who before all creatures, am most dear to him, and in me is all humility, was present there. And therefore they who did such proud and pompous things, and given other occasion to follow them, are like a sprinkler, which, when it is filled with a burning liquid, burns and befouls all of them whom it sprinkles. Right so do the proud give examples of pride and very grievously they burn souls by evil examples.

And therefore I will now do like a good mother, who, fearing for her children, makes them see the rod, which the servants also see. But the children, seeing the rod, fear to offend their mother, thanking her for threatening them but not beating them. The servants fear to be beaten if they trespass. And so from dreading the mother the children do more good deeds than they did before, and the servants do less evil.

So truly, because I am the mother of mercy, therefore I will show you the reward of sin, that the friends of God may be more fervent in the charity of God. And sinners, knowing their peril, flee from sin, at least, from fear. And in this way I have mercy on both good and evil; on the good people, that they may obtain and get more crowns and rewards in heaven, on the wicked, that they suffer less pain. And there is none who is so great a sinner, but I am ready to help him; and my Son to give him grace, if he ask mercy with charity”.

After this, there appeared three women: that is to say, the mother, and the daughter, and the niece, that is, that daughter's daughter. But the mother and the granddaughter appeared dead, and the daughter appeared to be alive. The said dead mother seemed to come creeping out of a foul and dark clay ditch; her heart was drawn out of her body, her lips cut off, and her chin trembled; her teeth, shining, white and long, ground and chattered

together; her nostrils were all gnawn; her eyes were put out, hanging down on her cheeks between sinews; her forehead was hollow; and instead of her forehead there was a great and dark depth.

In her head the head pan failed and had fallen away, and the brain boiled up as if it had been lead, and flowed out like black pitch. Her neck turned about like wood that is turned in the instrument of a joiner, against which was set a blade of the sharpest iron, cutting and shaving away without any comfort. Her breast was open and full of worms long and short; and each of them wallowed hither and thither upon each other. Her arms were like the hafts or handles of a grinding stone. Her hands were like keys full of knots and long. The chines or vertebrae of her back were all dissolved, each from the other; and one going up, another going down, they never ceased moving. A long and large serpent came forth from the nether part of her stomach to the other parts; and joining the head and tail together as a round bow, went round about her bowels continually, like a wheel. Her hips and her legs seemed like two rough staves of thorns full of most sharp prickles. Her feet were like toads.

Then this dead mother spoke to her daughter who was alive saying: "Hear you, altogether my tom and venomous daughter. Woe is me that I was ever your mother. I am she who set you in the nest of pride, in which you, made hot, grew until you came of age. And then it was pleasing to you that you had spent your time in that nest. Therefore I say to you that as often as you turn your eyes to look at, or see pride, which I taught you, so often cast you boiling venom in my eyes with insufferable burning heat. As often as you speak words of pride which you learned from me, so often swallow I most bitter drink. As often as your ears are filled with the wind of pride which the waves of arrogance and pride excite and stir up in you, that is to say, to hear praise of your own body and to desire praise from the world, which you learned from me, so often comes to my ears a fearful and dreadful sound, with blowing and burning wind.

Woe, therefore, to me, who am poor and wretched; poor because I have nor feel anything of good, and wretched because I have abundance and plenty of evil. But you, daughter, are like the tail of a cow which,

going in foul clay, as often as she moves her tail, as often does she befoul and sprinkles those near her. So you, daughter, are like a cow; for you have no goodly wisdom, and you go after the works and impulses of your body.

Therefore as often as you follow the works of my custom, that is to say, those sins which I taught you, so often is my pain renewed, and the more grievously it burns upon me. Therefore, my daughter, why are you proud of your generation and parentage? For it would be honor and respect to you that the uncleanness of my bowels was your pillow, my shameful member was your birthing, and the uncleanness of my blood was your clothing when you were born? Therefore, now, my womb, in which you lay, is altogether eaten by worms.

But why, daughter, do I complain to you, when I ought more to complain about myself? Because there are three things which torment me most grievously in my heart. The first is that I, made by God for heavenly joy, misused my conscience and have disposed myself to the sorrows of Hell. The second is that while God made me fair as an angel, I deformed and misshaped myself so that I am more like the devil than an angel of God. The third is that in the time given to me, I made a very evil change. For I received a little thing, short and transitory, that is to say, delight in sin, for which now I feel endless evil, that is, the pain of Hell”.

Then said this dead mother to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget: ”You”, she said, ”who see me, see me not but by bodily likeness. For if you should see me in that form in which I am, you would die from fear; and all my members are devils. And therefore the Scripture is true which says that as rightful men are members of God, so sinners are members of the devil. Right so I now experience the devil's arms fastened into my soul; for the will of my heart has disposed me to so much filth, deformity and misshapeness.

But hear now more. It seems to you that my feet are toads. That is because I stood firmly in sin; therefore now fiends stand firmly in me. And always biting and gnawing at me, they are never full. My legs and my thighs are as staves full of prickly thorns, for I had a will after fleshly delight and my own lust.

That each chine of my back is loose, and each of them moves against the other; that is therefore because the joy of my lust sometimes went too much upward for worldly solace and comfort, and sometimes too much downward because of too much depression, grouching, and wrath because of the adversity and disease of the world. And there as the back is moved and stirred after the motions of the head, so ought I to have been stable and moveable according to God's will, who is the head of all good. But because I did not do so, therefore I justly suffer these pains which you now see.

That a serpent creeps forth from the lower parts of my stomach to the higher parts, and standing like a bow turned about as a wheel, is because my lust and delight were inordinate; and my will would have had all the world's goods in its possession; and in many ways to have spent them, and indiscreetly. Therefore the serpent now searches about in my entrails without comfort, gnawing and biting without mercy.

That my breast is open and altogether gnawn with worms, shows the true justice of God, for I loved foul and rotten things more than God; and the love of my heart was all given to transitory and passing things of the flesh and of the world. And therefore as from small worms are brought longer worms, right so is my soul; for the foul stinking things which I loved are filled with devils. My arms seem as if they are beams; that is because I had my desire like two arms; that is to say, because I desired a long life, that I might have lived longer in sin.

I would also and desired that the Judgement of God had been easier than the Scripture said. Nevertheless, my conscience told me very well that my time was short and the Judgement of God insufferable. But again my desire and delight that I had in sinning stirred me to think that my life should be long and the Judgement of God bearable. And of such suggestions my conscience was subverted and turned upside down, and my will and reason followed lust and delectation. And therefore the devil is now lodged in my soul against my will, and my conscience understands and feels that the Judgement of God is right.

My hands are like long keys. And that is because the precepts and commandments were not pleasing to me; and therefore my hands are now to me a great burden, and lack any use. My neck is turned like wood which is placed against a sharp blade; that is because the words of God were not sweet to me to swallow and taste them in the charity and love of my heart; but they were too bitter, for they argued and criticized the delight and will of my heart; and therefore now a sharp blade stands at my throat.

My lips are cut off, for they were ready with vain, joking, and dishonest words of pride; but they failed and found it irksome to speak the words of God. My chin appears to be trembling, and my teeth grind and beat together; that is because I was wilfull in giving food to my body, so that I might seem fair and desirable, whole and strong to all the delights and pleasures of the body. And therefore now my chin trembles and quakes without comfort, and my teeth beat together; for all that they wasted was but unprofitable work as far as being fruit for the soul.

My nose is cut off; because amongst you it is done to them who trespass in such a case to their greater shaming, right so is the mark of my shame set upon me for ever. That my eyes hang down by sinews upon my cheeks is correct for, just as the eyes joyed in the fairness of my cheeks for ostentation and showing-off from pride, so now from much weeping they are put out and hang down to my cheeks with shame and confusion. And right so is my forehead hollow, and instead of it there is a great darkness. For about my forehead was set the veil and array of pride; and I would appear glorious, and be seen of fairness, and seem fair. And therefore is my forehead now dark and foul, deformed and misshapen. That my brain boils up and flows out like lead and pitch, is well deserved. For as lead is soft and may be bent according to the will of him who uses it, so was my conscience, which lay in my brain, bowed to the will of my heart, although I understood well the things that I should have done.

And the Passion also of the Son of God was in no way fastened in my heart, but it flowed out like a thing that I knew well and took no heed of. And furthermore, of that holy blood which flowed out of the members of

the Son of God, I took no more heed than of pitch, and fled, as if they were pitch, from the words of charity and of the love of God, lest they should convert me or trouble me from the delights of the body. Nevertheless, sometimes I heard the words of God to the shame of man; but as quickly as they entered, so quickly went they out of my heart again. And therefore now my brain flows out like burning pitch, with extremely hot boiling. My ears are stopped with hard stones, for words of pride entered in them joyfully, and softly and sweetly they went down into the heart, for the charity of God was closed out of my heart. And because I did all that I could for pride and for the world, therefore now joyful words have been shut out from my ears.

But you may ask if I did any meritorious or good deeds. And I answer you I did as does a money changer, who clips and cuts the money; and then reassigns or takes it again to the lord to whom it belongs. So I fasted and made alms and such other good works; but I did them for fear of Hell, and to escape the adversities and disease of the body. But because the charity and the love of God was cut off from my deeds, therefore such deeds were not valuable to me for obtaining Heaven, although they were not without reward. You might also ask how I am within in my will, when so much foulness and distortion is without. I answer: My will is as the will of a manslayer or of him who would gladly slay his own mother. So I covet and desire the worst evil to God, my Creator, who has been to me the best and most sweet”.

Then the dead granddaughter, that is, the daughter's daughter of the same dead Beldame, spoke to her own mother who was still alive, saying: "Hear, you scorpion, my mother, woe is me, because you have evilly deceived me. For you showed me your merry face, but you pricked me very grievously in my heart. Three counsels you gave me of your mouth, three things I learned of your works. And three ways you showed me in your process and going out. The first counsel was to love bodily in order to get carnal love and fleshly friendship. The second was to spend temporal goods over abundantly for praise from the world. The third was to have rest for the delectation and delight of the body.

These counsels were very harmful to me and a great hindrance. For I loved carnally, therefore I now have shame and spiritual envy. And because I spent temporal goods wastefully, therefore was I deprived of grace and the gifts of God in my life, and after my death I have obtained great confusion and shame. For I delighted in the quest and rest of the flesh in my life, therefore in the hour of my death began the unrest of my soul without comfort.

Three things also I learned of your works. The first was to do some good deeds, and nevertheless use them and not to leave that sin which delighted me: as a man should do who mixed honey with venom, and offered it to a Judge; and he, moved by that to anger, dropped it on him who offered it. So am I now expert in many fold anguish and tribulation.

The second is that I learned from you a marvelous manner of clothing myself; that was to conceal my eyes with a kerchief, to have sandals on my feet, gloves on my hands and the neck all naked in front. This kerchief concealing my eyes means the fairness of my body, which so obscured my spiritual eyes that I took no heed nor saw not the fairness of my soul. The sandals, which protect the feet underneath and not above, mean the holy faith of the Church, which I held faithfully, but there followed no fruitful works. For as sandals furthered my feet, right so my conscience, standing in the faith, promoted my soul. But because good works did not follow, therefore my soul was naked.

The gloves on the hands mean a vain hope I had; for I extended my works which are meant by the hands, into so great and large mercy of God, which is signified in the gloves, that, when I groped for the justice of God, I felt it not nor took any heed of it. Therefore I was overbold in sinning. But when death came, then the kerchief fell down from my eyes upon the earth, that is to say, upon my body. And then the soul saw and knew itself as naked, for few of my deeds were good, and my sins were many. And for shame I might not stand in the palace of the eternal king of bliss, because I was shamefully clothed. But then devils drove me into hard punishment, where I was scorned with shame and confusion.

The third thing, mother, that I learned of was to clothe the servant in the lord's clothes, and to set him in the lord's seat, and to praise him as a lord, and to minister to the lord the reliefs of the servant and all things that were despicable. This lord is charity and the love of God. The servant is a will to sin. Truly in my heart where ought to have reigned godly charity was set the servant, that is, delight and lust of sin, whom I clothed then when I turned my will to all temporal things that are made. And the reliefs and parings and the most abject things I gave to God, not out of charity, but out of fear. So therefore was my heart glad of fulfilling and delight of my own will, for the charity and love of God was excluded from me, and the good Lord cast out and the evil servant closed within. See, mother, these three things I learned from your doings.

Three ways you showed me also in your going out. The first was bright. But when I entered in it, I was blinded by its brightness. The second was compendious and slippery as ice, in which, when I went one step forward, I slid again backward a whole step. The third was very long, in which, when I went forth, there came after me a sudden rushing flood and bore me over a hill into a deep ditch.

In the first way is noted the going forth of my pride, which was too much; for the ostentation and showing which proceeded from my pride shone so much in my eyes that I did not think about the consequences of it, and therefore I was blind.

In the second way is noted that disobedience in this life is not long; for after death a man is compelled to obey. Nevertheless, to me it was long, for when I went one step forward in meekness of confession, I slid backward a step. Because I would that the sin confessed have been forgiven, but after making confession, I would not flee from the sin. And therefore I did not stand firmly in the step of obedience, but I slid again into sin, as does he who slides upon ice; because my will was cold and would not get up and flee from the things which delighted me. So therefore when I went a step forward, confessing my sins, I slid a step backward; because I would fall again to those sins and delectations that delighted me, of which I had made confession.

The third way was that I hoped for a thing which was impossible; that is to do more sin and not have lengthy pain; also to live longer, and the hour of death not be near. And when I went forth by this way, there came after me a hasty rushing flood; that is to say, death, which from one year to another caught me and turned my feet upside down with pain of illness.

What were these feet, but when sickness comes about, I might take little heed of the profit of the body and less to the health of the soul? Therefore I fell into a deep ditch, when my heart that was high in pride and hard in sin burst, and the soul fell down low into the ditch of pain for sin. And therefore this way was long; for after the life of the body was ended, soon there began a great pain. Woe, therefore, to me, my mother; for all those things that I learned from you with joy, now I wail about them with weeping and sorrow”.

Then spoke this same dead daughter to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, who saw all these things, saying: ”Hear, you who see me. To you it seems that my head and my face as like thunder, thundering and lightning within and without; and my neck and my breast as it were put into a hard press, with long sharp pricks; my arms and my feet are as it were long serpents; and my womb is smitten with hard hammers; my thighs and my legs are as it were flowing water out of the gutters of a roof, and my feet are frozen together.

But yet there is one pain within that is more bitter to me than all these. Right as if there were any person of whom all the breaths of his living spirits were stopped and all the veins, filled with wind, pressed up to the heart, which for violence and strength of those winds should begin to burst; so am I disposed within very wretchedly for the wind of my pride, which was to me much cherished. Nevertheless, yet I am in the way of mercy, for in my most grievous sickness I was confessed in the best manner I could, for fear of pain. But when death came near, than came to my mind the consideration and vision of the Passion of my God, how that was much more grievous and more bitter than all that I was worthy to suffer for my sins and demerits. And with such consideration, I became

tearful and wept and wailed that the charity and the love of God was so much to me and mine so little to him.

Then I beheld him with the eyes of my conscience and said: 'O Lord, I believe you, my God. O you Son of the Virgin, have mercy upon me for your bitter Passion; for now from henceforth would I amend my life, if I had time, very willingly'. And in that point of time was there lit and kindled in my heart a spark of charity, by which the Passion of Christ seemed more bitter to me than my own death. And so then burst my heart, and my soul come into the hands and power of devils to be presented to the Judgement of God.

Therefore it came into the hands of devils, because it was not worthy that the angels of fairness should come near the soul of so much foulness. But in the Judgement of God, when the devils cried and asked that my soul should be judged and damned to Hell, the Judge answered: 'I see', he said, 'a spark of charity in the heart which ought not to be quenched, but it must be in my sight. Therefore I judge the soul to Purgatory, until the time that it be so worthily purged and made clean that it deserve and have forgiveness'.

But now you might ask if I shall have part of all the goods and good deeds that were done for me. I answer you with a parable. Just as if you saw two balances hanging, and in that one were naturally bearing downward and in the other were some light thing going upward, the greater things and fair that were put in the empty balance, so much the rather should they lift up the other balance that is heavy and of great weight. It is so with me; for the deeper that I was in sin, the more grievously am I gone down into pain. And therefore what ever is done to the praise of God for me, it lifts me up from pain; and specially that prayer and good that is done by rightful men and the friends of God, and benefits that are done by well-gotten goods and deeds of charity. Such things, truly, they were that make me each day become closer to God".

After this spoke the holy Mother of God to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, and said: "You marvel how I, who am Queen of Heaven, and you

who live in the world, and that soul which is in Purgatory, and that other which is in Hell, speak together. This I shall tell you. I, truly, never go from Heaven, for I shall never be departed from the sight of God. Nor that soul which is in Hell shall not be separated from pain. Nor that soul which is in Purgatory, neither, until it is purged clean. Nor shall you come to us before the departure of your bodily life.

But your soul with your understanding, by virtue of the spirit of God, is lifted up to hear the words of God in Heaven: and you are allowed to know some pains in Hell and in Purgatory, for warning and amendment of evil livers and to the comfort and profit of them who are good. Nevertheless, know that your body and your soul are joined together on earth, but the Holy Spirit who is in Heaven gives you understanding to understand his will”.

EXPLANATION

After this, the third woman who was alive left all the world and entered into the religious life, and lived all her life after in great perfection and holiness.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches Saint Bride how active life and contemplative ought to be kept through the example of Mary and Martha; and first, of contemplative life.

Chapter 65

The Son of God says: ”Bride, there are two lives which are compared to Mary and Martha; which lives, if a man or a woman would follow he must first make clean confession of all his sins, being himself truly sorry for them, having the desire never to sin again. The first life, as the Lord bears witness, Mary chose; and it leads to the contemplation of heavenly things; and this is the best part and day's journey to everlasting health. Therefore every man and woman who desires to take and hold to the life of Mary, it is enough for him to have two things that are necessary to the

body; that is, clothing without vanity or showing of pride, and food and drink in scarceness and not in superfluity.

He must also have charity without any evil delight, and reasonable fasting after the rules of holy Church. And in his fasting he must take heed that he not become ill from unreasonable abstinence, unless by such sickness his prayers or preaching or other good deeds thereby are lessened, by which he might profit both his neighbour and himself. He must also carefully examine himself, that by his fasting he is neither made dull nor hasty to the rigor of justice or slow to the works of pity, to punish those who are rebellious, and to make unfaithful men subject to the yoke of faith. It is necessary to have bodily strength as well as spiritual. Therefore anyone who is sick or feeble, who would rather fast to my praise than eat, he shall have as great reward for his good will as does he who fasts reasonably for charity. And in the same way he who eats out of holy obedience, willing rather to fast than to eat, shall have the same reward as he who fasts.

Second, Mary ought not to delight in the praise of the world nor of its prosperity; nor ought he to sorrow at its adversity, except in that he ought to delight when wicked men are made devout and that lovers of the world are made lovers of God, and when good men profit in goodness and, by labouring in the service of God, are made more devout. Of this also ought he who is Mary to sorrow; that sinners fall into worse sin, and that God is not loved by his creature, and that God's commandments are despised and not kept.

Third, Mary ought not to be idle any more than is Martha; but after he takes his necessary sleep, he ought to rise, and with inward attentiveness of heart thank God who of his charity and love made everything from nothing; and of that same charity, taking the body of man, he made all things again; showing by his Passion and death his love for man, more than you who might not be. Mary must also thank God for all those who are saved; and for all who are in Purgatory, and for them who are in the world, praying God humbly that he suffered them not to be tempted beyond their strength.

Mary must also be discreet in prayer, and orderly in the praising of God, for if he has the necessities of life without business, he ought to make longer prayers. And if he grows bored with praying, and temptations grow upon him, then he may labour with his hands at some honest and profitable work, either to his own profit if he have need, or else to the profit of others. And if he is weary and bored both in prayer and in labour, then he may have some honest occupation, or hear words of others' edification with all seriousness, and without dissolution and vanity, until the body and soul be made more able and quick to the service of God.

If he who is Mary be such that he has not bodily sustenance but of his own labour, then he must make his prayer shorter for such needful work; and that same labour shall be profiting and increasing of prayer. If Mary can not work, or may not, then be not too ashamed or despairing about begging, but rather joyful; for then he follows me, the Son of God; for I made myself poor that man should become rich. And if he who is Mary be subject to obedience, he should live in obedience to his prelate, and the crown of reward shall be double the more than he was at his own liberty.

Fourth, Mary ought not to be covetous, no more than was Martha. But he ought to be truly generous; for Martha gives temporal goods for God, so ought Mary to give spiritual goods. And therefore, if Mary has loved God entirely in his heart, he should be careful of that word that many have in their mouths, saying: 'It is nothing to me, if I may help my own soul, What do I care about the works of my neighbours?' Or this: 'I am good: why should I care about how other men live?'

O daughter, they who say and think such words, if they see their friend troubled or dishonestly treated, they should risk their deaths to deliver their friend from tribulation. So must Mary do; he ought to sorrow that his God is offended, and that his brother, or his neighbour, is hurt; or if any fall into sin, Mary ought to labour as much as he may that he be delivered - nevertheless, with discretion. And if for that Mary is persecuted, he must seek another more secure place. For I myself who am God have said so: 'Si vos persecuti fuerint in una civitate fugite in aliam'; that is, if they

persecute you in one city, flee to another. And so did Paul, for it became necessary at one time; and therefore he was let down over the wall in a basket.

Therefore, that Mary be generous and merciful, five things are necessary to her: first, a house in which guests can sleep; second, clothes to cloth the naked; third, food to feed the hungry; fourth, fire to make the cold hot and warm; fifth, medicine for the sick.

The house of Mary is his heart, whose wicked guests are all the things that come to him and trouble his heart, such as anger, despair, sloth, greed, pride, and many others, which enter in by the five senses. Therefore all these vices, when they come, ought to lie as guests who sleep at rest. For as an innkeeper receives guests both good and bad with patience, so ought Mary to suffer all things for God by the virtue of patience, and not consent to sin nor delight in it, but remove it from his heart as much as he may little by little with the help of God's grace; and if he may not remove them and put them away, let him endure them patiently against his will, as guests knowing certainly that they will reap him more rewards, and in no ways to damnation.

Second, Mary ought to have clothes to clothe his guests, that is, humility, inward and outward, and compassion of heart for the disease of one's fellow Christian. And if Mary is despised by men, then he should think how I, God, was despised, taunted and suffered it patiently: how I was judged and spoke not; how I was scourged and crowned with thorns, and did not complain. Mary must also take heed that he show no tokens of wrath or impatience to them who taunt him or despise him; but he ought to bless them who persecute him, so that they who see it may bless God, whom Mary follows; and God himself shall return blessings for curses.

Mary also must beware that he neither backbite nor criticize those who burden him or trouble him. For it is damnable to backbite and to hear a backbiter and to criticize his neighbour impatiently; and therefore, that Mary may have the gift of meekness perfectly, he must study to admonish and to warn them of the perils for backbiting others, exhorting them with

charity by speech and example to true humility. Also the cloth of Mary ought to be compassion; for if he sees his fellow Christian sin, he ought to have compassion on him, and to pray to God to have mercy on him. And if he sees his neighbour suffer wrong or harm or be taunted, he ought to be sorry for that, and to help him with his prayers and other help and actions. Yes, against the great men of the world; for true compassion seeks not what he wants for himself, but for his fellow Christian.

But if Mary is such who is not heard amongst princes and great men and at leaving his cell gains nothing, then he should pray to God carefully for those who are in pain; and God, beholder of the heart, shall for the charity of him who prays turn the hearts of men to peace which are diseased. And either he shall be delivered of his tribulation, or else God shall give him patience, so that his reward in heaven shall be doubled. Therefore such a cloth of humility or of compassion ought to be in Mary's heart. For there is nothing which draws God so into a soul as humility and compassion for his fellow Christian.

Third, Mary must have food and drink for guests. For grievous guests are lodged in Mary's heart, when the heart is ravished out of itself and desires to see delectable things in this world and to have temporal possessions; when his ear desires to hear his own praises; when the flesh seeks to delight in fleshly things; when the spirit pretends to be frail and excuses sin; when there is tardiness to do good and forgetfulness of things that are to come; when good deeds are considered to be many and the evil thought to be few and forgotten.

Against such guests Mary has need of counsel, that he dissemble not nor fall asleep. Therefore Mary, heartened with faith, must rise firmly and answer thus to these guests: 'I will not have any temporal things, except those which are necessary to sustain the body. I will not spend the best hour or time, except to praise God. Nor will I take heed of fair or foul, nor what is profitable or unprofitable to the flesh, nor what is savory or unsavory to the taste, except only the pleasure of God and profitable to the soul; for I do not wish to live hour by hour, except to praise God'. Such a

will is food to guests who may come, and such an answer quenches inordinate delights.

Fourth, Mary must have a fire to make her guests warm, and to give them light. This fire is the heat of the Holy Spirit; for it is impossible for any man to forsake his own will or the carnal affection of his friends or the love of riches, but by the working inspiration and heat of the Holy Spirit. Neither may Mary himself, be he never so perfect, begin nor continue any good life without sweetness and information of the same Holy Spirit. Therefore, that Mary illumines and lights the guests that come first, he must think thus: 'God made me for that skill that I should praise him, love him and dread him above all things; and he was born of a Virgin to teach the way to heaven, which I should follow with humility. And after, with his death, he opened heaven, that by desiring and advancing I should haste there'.

Mary must also examine all his works and thoughts and desires, and how he has offended God, and how patiently God suffered man, and how in many ways God calls man to him. For such thoughts and others like them are the guests of Mary, which are all in darkness; but if they are lightened with the fire of the Holy Spirit, which fire comes to the heart when Mary thinks it is reasonable to serve God, and when he would rather suffer all pain than wittingly provoke God to anger, by whose goodness his soul is made and bought again with his blessed blood. The heart also is lit by this good fire, when reason thinks and discerns by what intent each guest, that is, each thought, comes, when the heart examines if the thought goes to everlasting joy or to transitory joy; if it leave no thought undiscussed, none unpunished, none without dread.

Therefore, that this fire may be got, and kept when it is obtained, it is necessary for Mary to gather together dry wood, by which this fire is fed; that is, that he be concerned about the stirrings of the flesh, that the flesh begin not to be wanton; and that he put to all diligence, that the works of pity and devout prayer be enlarged and increased, in which the Holy Spirit delights. But above all it is to know and see that where fire is kindled in a close vessel and has no ash, the fire is soon quenched and the container

becomes cold. And so is it with Mary; for if Mary desires to live only to praise God, then it is necessary for him that his mouth be opened and the fame of his charity to go out. Then is the mouth opened, when by speaking in fervent charity he gets spiritual sons for God.

But Mary must be very careful that he open the mouth of his preaching when they who are good may be made more fervent, and they who are wicked may be amended, where righteousness may be increased and evil habits removed. For my Apostle Paul would sometimes have spoken; but he was forbidden by my Spirit, and therefore at the right time he was still, and at the convenient time he spoke; and sometimes he used soft words, and sometimes sharp; and all his words and deeds were to the praise of God and to strengthen faith.

But if Mary may not preach, and has the desire and the knowledge how to preach, he must do so as a fox that goes about seeking many places with his feet; and when he finds the best and most suitable places, there he makes a den to rest in. So Mary must with words, examples, and prayers try the hearts of many; and when he finds hearts more able to receive the word of God, there must he stay and rest, admonishing and stirring whom he may. Mary must also work that a fitting show be given to his flame of fire: for the greater the flame is, the more people are illumined and enflamed by it. The flame has then a fitting show, where Mary neither dreads criticism nor shame, nor seeks his own praise, when he dreads neither contrarious things, nor delights in wealth and prosperity. And then it is more acceptable to God that Mary do his good deeds in the open rather than in private, to that extent that they who see them may praise and worship God.

Also, Mary ought to give out two flames, one in private, another openly: that is, to have double humility; the first in the heart, inwardly, the other outwardly. The first is that Mary thinks himself unworthy and unprofitable in all goodness, and that he prefers not nor exalts himself in his own conceit above any person; and that he does not desire to be seen and praised, but that he flees from all pride and haughtiness, desiring God above all things and following his words. If Mary send out such a flame in

his deeds, then shall his heart be lit with charity, and all contrary things that come to him shall be overcome and easily endured.

The second flame must be in the open; for if true humility is in the heart, it ought to appear in clothing and to be heard in the mouth and to be fulfilled in deeds. True humility is in the clothing when Mary chooses cloth of less price, from which he may gain warmth and profit, rather than cloth of more value, of which he might be proud and show off. For cloth which is cheap and is called by men vile and abject is truly fair to God because it provokes humility. But that cloth which is bought with great price and is called fair is foul to God; for it takes away the fairness of angels, which is humility. Nevertheless, if Mary is compelled by any reasonable cause to have better clothing than he would want, be not troubled therefore; for by that shall his reward be greater.

Also Mary ought to be meek in mouth, speaking humble words; fleeing from vain words and such as cause laughter; being careful of much speech; not using subtle nor pretty words; nor professing his own will or words before the comprehension and feeling of those who are better. And if Mary is praised for any good deed, he should not be exalted thereby with pride, but should answer thus: 'Laus sit deo qui dedit omnia', that is, praising God who gave all goodness. For what am I but dust before the face of the wind; or what good comes of me, earth without water? And if he is criticized, he should not be downcast but answer thus: 'It is appropriate; for I have so often offended in the sight of God and not done penance for which I should earn greater torment. Therefore pray for me that by enduring temporal reprimands, I may escape everlasting ones'.

If Mary is provoked by wrath to any misjudgment of his fellow Christian, he must be prudently careful of any indiscreet answer; for pride is often associated with wrath, and therefore it is wholesome advice that when wrath and pride come about, that he hold his lips tightly together until he can ask for help from God for endurance and patience; and until he may be advised what and how to answer; or until he may overcome himself. For then wrath is quenched in the heart and men may answer wisely to those who are unwise.

You know also that the devil is greatly envious of Mary; and therefore if he may not stop him by breaking God's commandments, then he stirs him to be easily moved with great wrath, or else to the dissoluteness of vain mirth, or else to dissolute and playful words. Therefore Mary must ask for help from God that all his words and deeds may be governed by God and addressed to God. Also Mary must have meekness in his actions, that he does the right not because of earthly praise; that he attempt nothing new, that he be not ashamed of being humble; that he flee singularity in his works, that he respect all; and that in all things he consider himself unworthy.

Also Mary ought rather to sit with the poor than with the rich; rather he should obey than be obeyed; rather to be silent than to speak; rather to be alone solitary than be constantly amongst the great of the world and among his worldly friends. Mary must hate his own will and think always on his death. Mary ought not to be idle, nor complain, nor be forgetful of the justice of God and of his own affections. Mary must be fervent in confession, careful concerning temptations, desiring to live for the right and for nothing else but the praise of God and that the health of souls be increased and enlarged.

Therefore, if Mary, who is thus disposed as I have now said, be chosen by Martha, and obeying, for the love of God takes the rule of many souls, there shall be given to him a double crown of reward, as I show you in a parable. There was a certain lord of great power who had a ship filled with precious merchandise, and said to his servants: 'Go to such a harbour, and you shall gain much for me, and glorious fruit. If the wind rises against you, work hard and do not become weary; for your reward shall be great'. Then the servants sailed away.

And the wind became strong, and tempests arose, and the ship was grievously battered. Because of this the ship's captain was exhausted and all despaired of their lives. And then they agreed to come to any harbour that the wind could blow them to, and not to the haven that the lord had assigned to them. When one of the servants who was more loyal than the

others heard this, he wailed and out of fervent love and zeal that he had for his lord, he violently seized hold of the steering board of the ship and with great strength he brought the ship to the harbour the lord desired. Therefore this man who thus manfully brought the ship to the harbour is to be rewarded with more singular rewards than any other.

It is the same with a good priest who for love of God and salvation of souls takes charge of the steering, not paying heed to fame, for he shall be doubly rewarded: first, because he shall be partner of all the good deeds of those whom he has brought to the haven; second, because his joy and bliss shall be increased without end. And so shall it be against those who desire fame and responsibility; for they shall be partner to all the pains and sins of those that they have chosen to govern. Second, for their confusion shall be without end.

For the priests who desire fame are more like whores than priests. For they deceive souls with their evil words and examples; and they are unworthy to be called either Mary or Martha, unless they make amends with penance.

Fifth, Mary ought to give his guests medicine; that is, delight and comfort them with God's words. For to all things that ever happen to him, whether they be joyful or burdensome, he ought to say: 'I will this; whatever God wills, I will do; and to his will I am readily obedient; though I should go to Hell'. For such a will is medicine against evil things that occur to the heart, and this will is delight in tribulation and a good restraint in prosperity. But because Mary has many enemies he must therefore make his confession frequently. For as long as he remains in a state of sin and could have confessed and is negligent and takes no heed, then is he rather to be called an apostate before God than Mary”.

Of the deeds of the active life which are understood by Martha.

”You must know also that though the part of Mary is best, yet the part of Martha is not evil, but praiseworthy and very pleasing to God. Therefore I shall tell you how Martha ought to be governed. For he ought to have five good things as well as Mary. First, the right faith regarding

God's Church. Second, to know the commandments of the Godhead and the counsels of the truth of the Gospel; and these he ought perfectly to keep in thought and deed. Third, he ought to keep his tongue from evil words that are against God and his neighbour, and his hand from all dishonest and unlawful actions, and his heart from too much greed and pleasure. He ought also to be content with the goods God has given him, and not to desire superfluous things.

Fourth, he ought to fulfill the deeds of mercy reasonably and modestly, that in doing those deeds he offends in no way. Fifth, he ought to love God above all things and more than himself. So did Martha, for he gave joyfully of himself, following my words and deeds; and after she gave all her goods for my love. And therefore she loathed temporal things, and sought heavenly things, and suffered heavenly things patiently, and took heed and care of others as of herself. And therefore she thought always on my charity and Passion; and she was glad in tribulation and loved all as a mother.

The same Martha also followed me every day, desiring nothing but to hear words of life. She had compassion on those who were grieving; she comforted the sick; she neither cursed nor said evil to any. But she did not imitate the pushiness of her neighbour and prayed for all. Therefore every man who desires charity actively ought to follow Martha in loving his neighbour, to bring him to heaven, but not in favoring and nourishing his vices and sins. He ought also to flee his own vanity, pride and doubleness. Also he ought not to use wrath or envy.

But mark well that Martha, praying for her brother Lazarus when he was dead, came first to me. But her brother was not yet raised until Mary came after, when she was called. And then for both sisters their brother was raised from the dead to life. So in spiritual life he who perfectly desires to be Mary must first be Martha, labouring physically to my praise. And he ought first to learn how to withstand the desires of the flesh and the temptation of the fiend and afterwards he may with deliberation ascend up the height of Mary. For he who is unproved and tempted, and he who

has not overcome the lusts of his flesh, how may he continually heed and choose heavenly things?

Who is the dead brother of Mary and Martha, but an unperfect work? For often a good work is done with an indiscreet intent and with an ill advised heart, and therefore it is done dully and slowly. But for the working of good deeds to be acceptable to me, it must be raised and quickened by Martha and Mary; that is, when the neighbour is clearly loved for God and to God, and God alone is desired above all things. And then every good work of man is pleasing to God. Therefore I said in the Gospel that Mary chose the better part; for then the part of Martha is also good, when he grieves for the sins of his fellow Christians; and then is the part of Martha better, when he labours that men may continue in the good life wisely and honestly, and that only for the love of God.

But the part of Mary is best when he beholds only heavenly things and the profit of souls. And the Lord enters into the house of Martha and Mary when the heart is fulfilled with good affections; and at peace away from the noise of worldly things; and thinking of God as always present; and not only contemplating and meditating on his love, but labouring in that day and night”.

How our Lady and Saint Peter kept a woman from falling into sin, by whose counsel she changed her life, and of special grace she fell ill, and so was purged and went to Heaven.

Chapter 93

The spouse of Christ, Saint Bride, saw spiritually a woman sitting in a rope whose one end a fair man held up, and a virgin of great beauty held up the other end.

Then our Lady appeared and said: ”This lady whom you know is wound up in much business of the flesh and the world, and it is miraculous

that she has balanced herself so well that she has not fallen. For she has often desired to sin, but never had the place nor the time to do so. And that caused the prayer of the Apostle Peter to be made by my Son, whom this woman loved. Sometimes she had time and space, but not the will; and that was made by the love of me who am the Mother of God.

And therefore now because her time draws near, Saint Peter counseled her to take upon her some harshness in clothing and wearing, putting away soft garments. For he was the chief Apostle; and yet he endured nakedness, prison and hunger, although he was mighty in heaven and on earth. I also, Mother of God, who never passed an hour on earth without tribulation and discomfort of heart, counsel her that she not be ashamed to be meek and to obey the friends of God”.

After this soon Saint Peter the Apostle appeared and said to Saint Bride: ”You, now, spouse of our lord God, go and ask of this woman whom I have loved and preserved, if she will wholly be my daughter”.

When Saint Bride had asked, and she consenting, said, ”I will, with all my heart”, Saint Peter answered: ”I shall arrange for her as for my daughter, Peronell, and take her into my charge”. Then, as soon as this lady heard this, she changed her life. And not long after, she fell ill, which continued for the rest of her life, until she was purged and with very great devotion gave up her spirit. For, when she came to the end of her life, she saw Saint Peter arrayed like a bishop, and Saint Peter Martyr in the habit of the Friars Preachers, for he was of that Order, both of whom she had loved entirely during her life.

And then she said openly: ”Who are these lords?” When the ladies and women who stood about her asked her what she saw, she answered: ”I see”, she said, ”marvelous things. For I see my lords, Peter the Apostle dressed pontifically and Peter the Martyr in the habit of the Preachers, whom I have always loved and always hoped for their help”. And then, crying: ”Blessed be God. See: I come”, she passed to our Lord.

Book 7

A revelation which Lady Bridget had in Rome after the year of jubilee and in which the Virgin Mary foretells to her that she will go to Jerusalem and Bethlehem when it pleases God; and Mary promises her that she will then show her the manner in which she gave birth to her blessed Son.

Chapter 1

When Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, was in Rome and was once absorbed in prayer, she began to think about the Virgin Birth and about the very great goodness of God who willed to choose such a very pure mother for himself. And her heart then became so greatly inflamed with love for the Virgin that she said within herself: "O my Lady, Queen of Heaven, my heart so rejoices over the fact that the most high God forechose you as his mother and deigned to confer upon you so great a dignity that I would rather choose for myself eternal excruciation in hell than that you should lack one smallest point of this surpassing glory or of your heavenly dignity."

And so, inebriated with the sweetness of love, she was above herself, alienated from her senses and suspended in an ecstasy of mental contemplation. The Virgin appeared then to her and said to her, "Be attentive, O daughter: I am the Queen of Heaven. Because you love me with a love so immense, I therefore announce to you that you will go on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem at the time when it pleases my Son. From there you will go to Bethlehem; and there I shall show you, at the very spot, the whole manner in which I gave birth to that same Son of mine, Jesus Christ; for so it has pleased him."

In Rome Lady Bridget had this revelation which speaks about the glorious sword of sorrow that pierced the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary and which the just man Simeon foretold to her in the temple.

Chapter 2

While Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, was in Rome, in the church called Saint Mary Major, on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she was caught up into a spiritual vision, and saw that in heaven, as it were, all things were being prepared for a great feast. And then she saw, as it were, a temple of wondrous beauty; and there too was that venerable and just old man, Simeon, ready to receive the Child Jesus in his arms with supreme longing and gladness. She also saw the Blessed Virgin most honorably enter, carrying her young Son to offer him in the temple according to the law of the Lord.

And then she saw a countless multitude of angels and of the various ranks of the saintly men of God and of his saintly virgins and ladies, all going before the Blessed Virgin-Mother of God and surrounding her with all joy and devotion. Before her an angel carried a long, very broad, and bloody sword which signified those very great sorrows which Mary suffered at the death of her most loving Son and which were prefigured by that sword which the just man Simeon prophesied would pierce her soul. And while all the heavenly court exulted, this was said to the bride: "See with what great honor and glory the Queen of Heaven is, on this feast, recompensed for the sword of sorrows which she endured at the passion of her beloved Son." And then this vision disappeared.

A revelation which blessed Francis showed to Lady Bridget wherein he invited her to his chamber to eat and to drink and explained to her spiritually that his chamber was obedience and that his food was to convert souls to God and that his drink was to see his converts loving God with all their strength and fervently absorbed in prayer and in the other virtues.

Chapter 3

On the feast of Saint Francis in his church in Trastevere in Rome, Saint Francis appeared to the same bride of Christ and said to her, "Come

into my chamber to eat and to drink with me.” When she heard this, she at once prepared for a journey in order to visit him in Assisi. After she had stayed there five days, she decided to return to Rome and entered the church to recommend herself and her loved ones to Saint Francis. He then appeared to her and said: ”Welcome! For I invited you into my chamber to eat and to drink with me. Know now that this building is not the chamber that I mentioned to you. No, my chamber is true obedience, to which I always so held that I never endured to be without an instructor. For I continually had with me a priest whose every instruction I humbly obeyed, and this was my chamber. Therefore do likewise, for this is pleasing to God.

My food, however, whereby I was refreshed with delight, was the fact that I most willingly drew my neighbors away from the vanities of worldly life to serve God with the whole of their hearts; and I then swallowed that joy as if it were the sweetest morsels. My drink, however, was that joy I had while I saw some whom I had converted loving God, devoting themselves with all their strength to prayer and contemplation, teaching others to live good lives, and imitating true poverty. Behold, daughter: that drink so gladdened my soul that, for me, all things in the world lost their taste. Enter, therefore, into this chamber of mine; and eat this, my food; and drink this drink with me. Drink it so that you may be refreshed with God eternally.”

Lady Bridget had this revelation in the city of Ortona, in the kingdom of Naples. Christ speaks to her and assures her that there are relics of the body of Saint Thomas the Apostle on the altar there and that he takes a most sweet delight in these relics and in those of his other saints, counting such relics as his precious treasure on earth and promising great merit and reward to those who honor them with due devotion.

Chapter 4

To a person who was wide awake and at prayer, it seemed as if her heart were on fire with divine charity and entirely full of spiritual joy so that her body itself seemed to fail in its strength. She then heard a voice

that said to her: "I am the Creator and Redeemer of all. Know therefore that such a joy, as you now feel in your soul, is a treasure of mine. For it is written that 'the Spirit breathes where he will, and you hear his voice, but you know not whence he comes or whither he goes.'

This treasure I bestow on my friends in many ways and by many means and through many gifts. However, I wish to tell you about another treasure, which is not yet in heaven but is with you on earth. This treasure is the relics and bodies of my friends. For, in truth, whether they are fresh or moldering, whether they have turned into dust and ashes or not, the bodies of my saints are most certainly my treasure.

But, you may ask, since Scripture says, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart is,' how then is my heart with that treasure, namely, with the relics of the saints? I answer you: my heart's supreme delight is to bestow - according to their will, their faith, and the toils of their journey - everlasting rewards on all those who visit the places and honor the relics of my saints, namely, of those who had been glorified by miracles and canonized by the supreme pontiffs. Thus my heart is with my treasure. Therefore, I want you to know for certain that in this place is my most choice treasure, namely, the relics of my apostle Thomas, which are not found elsewhere in such quantity as they are on this altar, where they are unspoiled and undivided.

For when that city where my apostle's body was first buried was destroyed, then with my permission this treasure was translated by certain of my friends to this city and was placed on this altar. But now it lies here as if concealed, for before the apostle's body came here, the princes of this land were of the disposition described in the Scriptures: 'They have mouths and will not speak. They have eyes and will not see. They have ears and will not hear. They have hands and will not touch. They have feet and will not walk,' etc. How could such people then, with such an attitude toward me, their God, be able to pay due honor to such a treasure?

Therefore, anyone who loves me and my friends above all, and who would rather die than offend me in the least and who also has the will and

the authority to honor me and to instruct others, such a one, whoever it be, will exalt and honor my treasure, namely, the relics of this my apostle whom I chose and forechose. Therefore, it should be said and preached for very certain that, just as the bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul are in Rome, the relics of Saint Thomas, my apostle, are in Ortona.”

The bride, however, answered and said: ”O Lord, did not the princes of this kingdom have churches built; and did they not practice great almsgiving?” The Lord said to her: ”They have done many things and have offered me much money to appease me. Yet the alms of many of them were to me less pleasing and acceptable because of the marriages that they had contracted contrary to the statutes of the holy fathers. And even though those marriages that the supreme pontiffs permitted were ratified and to be upheld, nevertheless the will of those people was corrupt and was striving against the statutes of the Church. Therefore, at my divine judgment, this must be examined and judged.”

ADDITION

When the lady had gone to Ortona, it happened that she and her companions had to spend a whole night under God's open sky, in the cold and in a heavy rain. Then toward dawn, Christ said to her: ”For three reasons, tribulation comes to human beings: either for greater humility - as when King David was troubled; or for greater fear and caution - as when Sarah, Abraham's wife, was taken away by the King; or for a human being's greater consolation and honor. And so it has happened to you. For I gave those who met you the impulse to proceed no farther that day. But you would not believe them, and so you suffered as you have. Therefore go now into the city, and my servant Thomas will give you what you desire.”

Item concerning the same thing. Christ appeared in Ortona and said: ”I told you earlier that Saint Thomas, my apostle, was my treasure. This is certainly true. For Thomas himself is truly a light of the world. But human beings love darkness more than light.”

Then Saint Thomas also appeared and said: "I will give to you a treasure that you have long since desired." And in the same moment, a tiny splinter of a bone of blessed Thomas came forth from the very case of Saint Thomas's relics without anyone's touch. The lady received it with joy and reverently saved it.

Lady Bridget had this revelation in Naples at the request of Lord Elzear, son of the countess of Ariano and, at that time, a young scholar of good disposition. He had then asked Lady Bridget to pray to God for him. While she was at prayer, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and gave to her this revelation, by means of which she informs him about the measures to be maintained in his life and very beautifully says that reason must be the doorkeeper and guardian of the soul, to expel all temptations and resist them manfully lest they enter one's inner house.

Chapter 5

To almighty God, from whom all good things proceed, be praise and honor, especially for these things that he has done for you in the time of your youth! Of his grace one must ask that the love you have for him may increase in you daily even until death.

A mighty and magnificent king constructed a house, in which he placed his beloved daughter, assigning her to the custody of a man and saying this: "My daughter has mortal enemies and therefore you must guard her with all care. There are four things that you must beware with diligent premeditation and constant concern: first, that no one undermine the foundation of the house; second, that no one climb over the top of the outer walls; third, that no one breach the walls of the house; fourth, that no enemy enter through the gates."

My Lord, this parable that I write for you out of divine charity - God, the searcher of all hearts being my witness - must be understood spiritually. Therefore, by the house I mean your body, which the King of heaven formed out of the earth. By the king's daughter I mean your soul, created by the power of the Most High and placed in your heart. By the

guardian I mean human reason, which will guard your soul according to the will of the eternal King. By the foundation I mean a good, firm, and stable will. For on it must be built all good works, by which the soul is best defended.

Therefore, since your will is such that you wish to live for nothing else but to follow God's will, showing him by word and deed all the honor you can, and also serving him with your body and your goods and all your strength, as long as you live, in order that you may be able to commend your soul, preserved from all impurity of the flesh, to its Creator, then, oh how vigilantly must you guard this foundation, i.e., your will, by means of the guardian, i.e., your reason, so that no one may be able to undermine it with his siege-engines to the soul's harm.

By those who strive to undermine this type of foundation I mean those who speak to you thus and say: "My Lord, be a layman and take to yourself a charming, noble, and wealthy wife so that you may rejoice in your offspring and heirs and no be weighed down by the tribulation of the flesh." And others perhaps reply in this manner: "If you want to become a cleric, then also learn the liberal arts, to the end that you may be called 'master' while procuring for yourself, by prayers or gifts, as much as you can of the goods and revenues of the Church.

Then you will have worldly honor for your knowledge; and by your worldly friends and your many servants, you will be glorified for the abundance of your riches." Behold: if perhaps anyone should offer you such persuasion, immediately make the guardian, i.e., reason, answer him and say that you would be willing to endure all the tribulation of the flesh rather than lose your chastity. Answer also that you want to acquire knowledge and the arts for the honor of God and the defense of the Catholic faith, for the strengthening of good people and for the correction of the erring and of all who need your advice and teaching; and say that you do not wish to desire anything in this life beyond sustenance for your body and for the household truly necessary to you and not overly enlarged for the sake of vainglory.

Say also that, if perchance divine providence were to confer on you some added dignity, you desire to order all things wisely for the benefit of your neighbor and for the honor of God. And so indeed the guardian, i.e., reason, will be able to expel those who are exerting themselves to undermine the foundation, i.e., your good will. Reason must also constantly and diligently beware lest anyone climb over the top of the walls. By this top of the walls I mean charity, which is more sublime than all the virtues. Know therefore most certainly that the devil desires nothing more than to leap over that wall. And so he incessantly tries as much as he can that mundane charity and carnal love may surpass divine charity.

Wherefore, my Lord, as often as worldly love attempts to advance itself in your heart in preference to divine charity, immediately send the guardian, i.e., reason, out to meet it with the commandments of God and saying that you would rather endure death in soul and body than live to such an end that you would, by word or deed, provoke a God so kind, and, indeed, that you would not in any way spare your own life, your goods or possessions, or the favorable opinions of your relatives and friends provided that you might be able to please God alone in every respect and honor him in all things, and that you choose to submit voluntarily to all tribulations rather than cause any harm, scandal, or trouble to any of your neighbors - whether higher or lower than yourself - and that, in accord with the precept of the Lord, you wish instead to love all your neighbors thoroughly and in a brotherly way.

And if you do this, my Lord, you are proved to love God more than yourself, and your neighbor as yourself. Then, therefore, the guardian, i.e., reason, can rest securely because no rival of your soul is able to climb over the top of the walls.

By the house walls, in truth, I mean four delights of the heavenly court, which a human being ought to long for interiorly with attentive meditation. The first is a fervent longing in the heart to see God himself in his eternal glory and those unfailing riches that are never taken away from one who has acquired them. The second is an incessant wish to hear those

sweet-sounding voices of the angels in which, without tiring and without end, they praise God and unceasingly adore him.

The third is a whole-hearted and fervently longing desire eternally to praise God even as the very angels do. The fourth is longing to possess the everlasting consolations of the angels and of the holy souls in heaven. Hence it is to be noted that, just as one who is inside a house is always surrounded by walls wherever one turns, so it is with everyone who, day and night, with supreme longing, desires those four things - namely, to see God in his glory, to hear the angels praising God, to praise God together with them, and to possess their consolations. Truly, wherever such a one turns or whatever work he is intent upon, he is then always preserved unharmed inside firm walls so that, as a result, by dwelling among the very angels in this life, he may be said to enjoy the company of God.

Oh how much, my Lord, your enemy longs to dig through walls of this sort and to take such inner delights away from the heart and to introduce and entangle into your desire others contrary to them, which could gravely harm your soul. On which account, the guardian, i.e., reason, must have diligent precaution about the two ways by which the enemy usually comes. The first way is the hearing; the second, sight. He comes indeed through the hearing when he introduces into the heart the delights of secular songs and of various sweet-sounding instruments, of useless tales and of narrations of the praises of one's own person. The more these things raise one up through pride in oneself, the more distantly one is separated from the humble Christ.

Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must resist such delight and say this: "Just as the devil has hatred for all the humility that the Holy Spirit breathes into the hearts of human beings, so I, by the working of God's help, will have hatred for all the pomp and worldly pride that the evil spirit, with his pestilent inflammation, pours into hearts; and it shall be to me as hateful as the stench of rotten corpses, which immediately suffocates those who catch it in their nostrils." Through sight also the enemy is accustomed to come, as if by a second way, to dig through the aforementioned house walls; and he brings with him many tools: namely,

all sorts of metals wrought into various objects and forms, precious stones, prestigious clothing, lordly palaces, castles, estates, ponds, forests, vineyards, and all other sorts of costly and lucrative things.

For if all these things are fervently desired, they are a proven means of dissipating the aforementioned house walls, i.e., the heavenly delights. Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must run out quickly, before such things come into the heart's delight and love, and must say: "If I shall have in my power any of the possessions of this sort, I will lay it away in that chest where thieves or moth are not feared; and with divine grace helping me, I will not offend my God through coveting others' possessions; nor, through ambition for the things of others, will I separate myself in any way from the company of those who serve Christ."

By the gates of the said house I mean, in fact, all the body's needs, which indeed the body cannot decline: namely, eating, drinking, sleep, wakefulness, and even occasional distresses and joys. Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must stand by these gates, i.e., the body's needs, with concern and, with divine fear, must resist enemies wisely and persistently lest they enter toward the soul.

Therefore, just as in taking food and drink one must beware lest the enemy enter through overindulgence, which makes the soul slothful in serving God, so too one must beware lest the foe gain entrance through excessive abstinence, which makes the body weak in doing all things. Let the guardian, i.e., reason, also take note lest, either when you are alone with your household or when guests arrive, for the sake of worldly honor and the favorable opinion of human beings, there be an uninterrupted succession of too many courses; but, out of divine charity, treat each one well while excluding a multiplicity of foods and also extravagant delicacies.

Next, the guardian, i.e., reason, must with vigilance and attention consider the fact that, just as food and drink must be moderated, so too must sleep be moderated with fear in such a way that the body may be nimble and in better order for accomplishing all the honor of God so that

every waking moment may be usefully spent on the divine offices and on honest labors, with all the heaviness of sleep far removed.

Moreover, at the approach of any distress or rancor, the guardian, i.e., reason, accompanied by his companion, namely, fear of God, must swiftly run forth lest, through anger or impatience, it happen that you forfeit divine grace and gravely provoke God against yourself. What is more, when some consolation or joy fills your heart, let the guardian, i.e., reason, imprint the heart more deeply with the fear of God which, with the help of the grace of Jesus Christ, will moderate that consolation or joy in a way that will be of more use to you.

ADDITION

When Lady Bridget was in Naples, there were revealed to her the innermost secrets of the heart of Elzear - later, a cardinal - and certain wonderful things that were going to happen to him. When he heard these things, he was stunned; and he changed for the better.

In the year of our Lord, 1371, in the month of May, on the day of blessed Urban, pope and martyr, when Lady Bridget had been living in Rome for many years, after she had returned from pilgrimages in the kingdom of Naples, while she was at prayer on the day and in the month given above, Christ appeared to her and said that she should prepare herself to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to visit the Holy Sepulchre.

Chapter 6

While Lady Bridget was living continuously in Rome, she was one day at prayer and her mind was lifted up. Christ then appeared to her and spoke to her, saying this: "Prepare yourselves now to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to visit my sepulchre and the other holy places that are to be found there. You will leave Rome when I tell you."

In Rome before Lady Bridget went overseas a certain devout Friar Minor consulted the said lady concerning some doubts in his conscience. As this lady prayed, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and gave her complete answers to those doubts and, moreover, said that no matter how sinful the pope or the priests might be - provided that they are not heretics - the pope has the keys of the Church and the true power of binding and loosing and that at the altar the priests fully consecrate and handle the Blessed Sacrament of the Body of Christ even though they are unworthy of heavenly glory.

Chapter 7

Honor and thanks be given to almighty God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, his most worthy Mother! It seemed to me, unworthy person that I am, that while I was absorbed in prayer, the Mother of God spoke to me, a sinner, these following words: "Say to my friend the friar, who through you sent his supplication to me, that it is the true faith and the perfect truth that if a person, at the devil's instigation, had committed every sin against God and then, with true contrition and the purpose of amendment, truly repented these sins and humbly, with burning love, asked God for mercy, there is no doubt that the kind and merciful God himself would immediately be as ready to receive that person back into his grace with great joy and happiness as would be a loving father who saw returning to him his only, dearly beloved son, now freed from a great scandal and a most shameful death.

Yes, much more willingly than any fleshly father, the loving God himself forgives his servants all their sins if they assiduously repent and humbly ask him for mercy and they fear to go on committing sins, and, with all the longing of their hearts, desire God's friendship above all things.

Therefore say to that same friar, on my behalf, that because of his good will and my prayer, God in his goodness has already forgiven him all the sins that he ever committed in all the days of his life. Tell him also that because of my prayer the love that he has for God will always increase in him right up to his death and will in no way diminish.

Likewise, say to him that it pleases God my Son that he stay in Rome, preaching, giving good advice to those who ask, hearing confessions, and imposing salutary penances, unless his superior should send him sometimes out of the city for some lawful necessity. For their transgressions, the same friar should charitably reprove his other brothers with good words, with salutary teachings, and, when he might be able to correct them, even with just rebukes, to the end that they may keep the rule and humbly amend their lives.

Furthermore, I now make known to him that his Masses and his reading and his prayers are acceptable and pleasing to God. And therefore tell him that, just as he guards himself against any excess in food and drink and sleep, so he must diligently guard himself against too much abstinence, in order that he may not suffer any faintness in performing divine labors and services. Also, he is not to have an overabundance of clothing but only necessary things, according to the Rule of Saint Francis, so that pride and cupidity may not ensue; for the less costly and valuable his clothes have been, the more lavish shall be his reward. And let him humbly obey all of his superior's instructions that are not contrary to God and that the friar's own ability permits him to perform.

Tell him also, on my behalf, what he will answer to those who say that the pope is not the true pope and that it is not the true Body of Jesus Christ my Son that the priests confect on the altar. He should answer those heretics in this way: 'You have turned the backs of your heads to God, and thus you do not see him. Turn therefore to him your faces, and then you will be able to see him.'

For it is the true and Catholic faith that a pope who is without heresy is - no matter how stained he be with other sins - never so wicked as a result of these sins and his other bad deeds that there would not always be in him full authority and complete power to bind and loose souls. He possesses this authority through blessed Peter and has acquired it from God. For before Pope John, there were many supreme pontiffs who are

now in hell. Nevertheless, the just and reasonable judgments that they made in the world are standing and approved in God's sight.

For a similar reason, I also say that all those priests who are not heretical - although otherwise full of many other sins - are true priests and truly confect the Body of Christ my Son and that truly they touch God in their hands on the altar and administer the other sacraments even though, because of their sins and evil deeds, they are unworthy of heavenly glory in God's sight.”

After the abovesaid friar had received from Lady Bridget the last revelation above, he asked her to pray to God concerning the matter of Christ's private property, and also concerning the authority of the supreme pontiff and of the celebrating priests. As the lady was praying, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and answered all these points as follows.

Chapter 8

“Say to my friend the friar that it is not licit for you to know whether the soul of Pope John XXII is in hell or in heaven. Nor indeed is it licit for you to know anything about the sins that the same pope took with him when, after his death, he came before God's judgment. But tell the same friar that those decretals that the same Pope John made or established concerning Christ's private property contain no error in the Catholic faith nor any heresy.

I, indeed, who gave birth to the true God himself, bear witness to the fact that the same Jesus Christ, my Son, had one personal possession and that he alone possessed it. This was that tunic that I made with my own hands. And the prophet witnesses to this fact, saying in the person of my Son: 'Over my garment, they cast lots.' Behold and be attentive to the fact that he did not say 'our garment' but 'my garment.'

Know too that, as often as I dressed him in that tunic for the use of his most holy body, my eyes then filled at once with tears and my whole heart

was wrung with trouble and grief and was afflicted with intense bitterness. For I well knew the manner in which that tunic would in future be separated from my Son, namely, at the time of his passion when, naked and innocent, he would be crucified by the Jews. And this tunic was that garment over which his crucifiers cast lots. No one had that same tunic while he lived, but only he alone.

Know too that all those who say that the pope is not the true pope and that the priests are not true priests or rightly ordained and that what is consecrated by the priests in the celebration of Masses is not the true Body of my blessed Son, yes, all those who assert such errors are puffed up with the spirit of the devil in hell.

For truly these same heretics have committed such serious acts of malice and frightful sins against God that, because of their very great demerits, they are damnably filled with diabolic wickedness, and, through their heresy, they are cut off and cast out from the number of the whole flock of Christianity in the just judgment of the divine majesty, just as Judas was shut out and cut off from the sacred number of the apostles because of his wicked demerits: for he betrayed Christ my Son. Know that, even so, all those who want to amend their lives will obtain mercy from God.”

How Christ, speaking to Lady Bridget during prayer, instructs her to go now to Jerusalem and promises to her bodily strength and the necessary expenses.

Chapter 9

The Son of God speaks to blessed Bridget his bride and says: ”Go now and depart from Rome for Jerusalem. Why do you plead your age? I am the Creator of nature; I can weaken or strengthen nature as it pleases me. I will be with you. I will direct your way. I will guide you and lead you back to Rome; and I will procure for you everything necessary, more adequately than you have ever had before.”

The Virgin Mary, speaking to Lady Bridget, says that in no way is it God's will that clerics should have wives or be contaminated by carnal vice - prohibiting any pope from allowing this marriage of clerics to take place or be established in God's Church.

Chapter 10

Rejoice eternally, O blessed Body of God, in perpetual honor and in perennial victory and in your everlasting omnipotence together with your Father and the Holy Spirit and also with your blessed and most worthy Mother and with all your glorious heavenly court. To you be praise indeed, O eternal God, and endless thanksgiving for the fact that you deigned to become a human being and that for us in the world you willed to consecrate your venerable Body out of material bread and lovingly bestowed it on us as food for the salvation of our souls!

It happened that a person who was absorbed in prayer heard then a voice saying to her: "O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritually, hear now the things that I want to reveal to you: namely, concerning that archbishop who said that if he were pope, he would give leave for all clerics and priests to contract marriages in the flesh. He thought and believed that this would be more acceptable to God than that clerics should live dissolutely, as they now do. For he believed that through such marriage the greater carnal sins might be avoided; and even though he did not rightly understand God's will in this matter, nonetheless that same archbishop was still a friend of God.

But now I shall tell you God's will in this matter; for I gave birth to God himself. You will make these things known to my bishop and say to him that circumcision was given to Abraham long before the law was given to Moses and that, in that time of Abraham, all human beings whatsoever were guided according to their own intellect and according to the choice of their own will and that, nevertheless, many of them were then friends of God. But after the law was given to Moses, it then pleased

God more that human beings should live under the law and according to the law rather than follow their own human understanding and choice. It was the same with my Son's blessed Body.

For after he instituted in the world this new sacrament of the eucharist and ascended into heaven, the ancient law was then still kept: namely, that Christian priests lived in carnal matrimony. And, nonetheless, many of them were still friends of God because they believed with simple purity that this was pleasing to God: namely, that Christian priests should have wives and live in wedlock just as, in the ancient times of the Jews, this had pleased him in the case of Jewish priests. And so, this was the observance of Christian priests for many years.

But that observance and ancient custom seemed very abominable and hateful to all the heavenly court and to me, who gave birth to his body: namely, because it was being thus observed by Christian priests who, with their hands, touch and handle this new and immaculate Sacrament of the most holy Body of my Son. For the Jews had, in the ancient law of the Old Testament, a shadow, i.e., a figure, of this Sacrament; but Christians now have the truth itself - namely, him who is true God and man - in that blessed and consecrated bread.

After those earlier Christian priests had observed these practices for a time, God himself, through the infusion of his Holy Spirit, put into the heart of the pope then guiding the Church another law more acceptable and pleasing to him in this matter: namely, by pouring this infusion into the heart of the pope so that he established a statute in the universal Church that Christian priests, who have so holy and so worthy an office, namely, of consecrating this precious Sacrament, should by no means live in the easily contaminated, carnal delight of marriage.

And therefore, through God's preordinance and his judgment, it has been justly ordained that priests who do not live in chastity and continence of the flesh are cursed and excommunicated before God and deserve to be deprived of their priestly office. But still, if they truthfully amend their

lives with the true purpose of not sinning further, they will obtain mercy from God.

Know this too: that if some pope concedes to priests a license to contract carnal marriage, God will condemn him to a sentence as great, in a spiritual way, as that which the law justly inflicts in a corporeal way on a man who has transgressed so gravely that he must have his eyes gouged out, his tongue and lips, nose and ears cut off, his hands and feet amputated, all his body's blood spilled out to grow completely cold, and finally, his whole bloodless corpse cast out to be devoured by dogs and other wild beasts. Similar things would truly happen in a spiritual way to that pope who were to go against the aforementioned preordinance and will of God and concede to priests such a license to contract marriage.

For that same pope would be totally deprived by God of his spiritual sight and hearing, and of his spiritual words and deeds. All his spiritual wisdom would grow completely cold; and finally, after his death, his soul would be cast out to be tortured eternally in hell so that there it might become the food of demons everlastingly and without end. Yes, even if Saint Gregory the Pope had made this statute, in the aforesaid sentence he would never have obtained mercy from God if he had not humbly revoked his statute before his death.”

This is the beginning of a revelation that Lady Bridget had in Naples for the lady queen of the same city. But other things contained therein are not set down here because they are secrets that pertain to the status and person of the said lady queen.

Chapter 11

“I am God, the Creator of all. I gave to angels and to humans free decision so that those who willed to do my will might remain with me forever and so that those who thought things contrary to me might be separated from me. And so, certain of the angels became demons because they did not will to love me or to obey me. Then when man had been

created and the devil saw my love for man, the devil not only became my enemy but also promoted war against me by inciting Adam to violate my commandments. The devil prevailed on that occasion by my permission and as a result of my justice; and ever since that time, the devil and I are in discord and strife because I want man to live according to my will while the devil exerts himself to make man follow his own desires.

Therefore at that moment when I opened heaven with my heart's blood, the devil was deprived of that justice which he seemed to have; and those souls that were worthy were saved and freed. Then indeed the law was established that it should be in man's decision to follow me, his God, in order to obtain the everlasting crown. But if he follows the devil's desires, he will have everlasting punishment. Thus the devil and I do struggle, in that we both desire souls as bridegrooms desire their brides. For I desire souls in order to give them eternal joy and honor; but the devil desires to give them eternal horror and sorrow. Hear what the queen had done to me. I allowed the raising of her to a kingship, etc."

ADDITION

Christ speaks: "Write to her that she should make a clean confession of all that she had done from her youth and that she should have a firm purpose of amendment according to the advice of her confessor. Second, she should diligently recall the manner and the quality of her life during her marriage and during her rule; for she is going to render an account of everything to me. Third, she must have the intention of paying her debts and of restoring that which she knows was wrongly acquired. For the soul is in peril as long as such things are kept; and it does no good to give lavish gifts if debts go unpaid. Fourth, she is not to burden the community with her new inventions, but instead should lighten the burdens which have grown customary. For God will hear the sigh and the crying of those in misery.

Fifth, she must have councilors who are just and not covetous; and she must entrust her judgments to such men as love truth and do not fawn upon factions or seek to grow rich but know how to be content with what is

necessary. Sixth, every day, at fixed times, she should remember God's wounds and his passion, for by this means the love of God is renewed in the heart. Seventh, at fixed times she should collect the poor, wash their feet, and refresh them. She should love all her subjects with sincere charity, bringing all those at strife to accord and consoling those who are unjustly offended. Eighth, she should grant her gifts with discretion and according to her means, not oppressing some while making others rich, but wisely relieving some without burdening anyone.

Ninth, she is not to be more attentive to the money of criminals than to justice; but setting aside all greed, she is to weigh the quality of the crimes and show more compassion where she sees greater humility. Tenth, during her lifetime, she is to apply all her diligence to ensure that her kingdom can be in a calm state after her death, for I predict to her that henceforth she will not have offspring from her womb. Eleventh, she should be content with the colors and beauty by which God has adorned her face; for extraneous color is very displeasing to God. Twelfth, she is to acquire greater humility and contrition for her sins because, in my eyes, she is a predator of many souls, a prodigal squanderer of my goods, and a rod of tribulation to my friends. Thirteenth, she must have continual fear in her heart because in all the time she has had, she has led the life of a lascivious woman rather than that of a queen.

Fourteenth, let her put aside worldly customs and those women who flatter her. The short time that she has left, she should spend in honoring me, for up to now she has treated me as if I were a human being without recollection of her sins. Let her now fear and live in such a way that she may not feel my judgment. Otherwise, if she does not listen to me, I will judge her not as a queen but as an ungrateful apostate; and I will scourge her from head to heel; and she will be a disgrace before me and my angels and my saints."

Item, a revelation. Christ speaks: "Write those things with fewer and gentler words, just as the Holy Spirit will inflame you, and send them through my bishop to the queen."

Item, concerning a certain queen. A lady was seen standing in a shift spattered with sperm and mud. And a voice was heard: "This woman is a monkey that sniffs at its own stinking posterior. She has poison in her heart and she is harmful to herself and she hastens into snares that throw her down." And again she was seen wearing a crown of twigs spattered with human excrement and with mud from the streets and sitting naked on a tottering beam. At once there appeared a most beautiful virgin who said: "This is that insolent and audacious woman who is reputed by mankind to be a lady of the world, but in God's eyes, she has been cast off, as you see." And the virgin added: "O woman, think of your entrance and be attentive to your end; and open the eyes of your heart and see that your councilors are those who hate your soul!"

Item, concerning a certain queen. A woman was seen sitting on a golden seat; and two Ethiopians stood before her - one, as it were, on the right and the other on the left. The one standing on the right called out and said: "O lionlike woman, I bring blood. Take and pour out! For it is a mark of the lioness to thirst after blood." The one on the left said: "O woman, I bring to you fire in a vessel. Take - for you are of a fiery nature - and pour out into the waters in order that your memory may last in the waters as well as on the land."

Then a virgin of wondrous beauty appeared, and the Ethiopians fled from her sight. She said: "This woman is in a perilous state. If she prospers in accordance with her will, the result will be tribulation for many. But if she suffers tribulation, the result will be more useful to her for obtaining eternal life. She herself does not wish to give up her own will or to suffer tribulation in compliance with God. Therefore, if she is left to her own will, she will not be the cause of consolation for herself or for others."

Item, a revelation. The Son appeared and said: "This woman had done some things that did please me. Therefore, because of the prayers of my friends, I am willing to point out to her how she may escape the scorn of mankind and the squandering of her own soul if, indeed, she obeys well; if not, she would not escape the justice of the Judge; for she did not will to hear the Father's voice."

Concerning Lord Gomez. The Mother of God speaks: "Advise him to do justice wherever he can. If he knows that he has goods that were wrongly acquired, he must not delay in making restitution. He must also be careful not to impose unusual burdens on his subjects, and he must be content with the things that he has because they are sufficient for him if he manages them discreetly and with moderation. Women other than his own wife, he must avoid like poison; and he must not lead out the army against anyone nor take part in the action himself unless he fully knows that justice is on his side and that the war is just. He must also be zealous in making frequent use of confession and in receiving the Body of Christ more frequently and in occupying himself, at fixed times in the day, with the remembrance of Christ's passion and his wounds."

Concerning Anthony of Carleto. Christ speaks: "Tell the queen to let him stay in his position. If he rises up to greater things, it will be at the cost of his soul; and neither he himself nor his friends will have any joy out of his promotion." And so it all turned out.

This revelation was given by God to Lady Bridget in Naples at the request of Lord Bernard, the Neapolitan archbishop. He asked her to pray to God concerning some doubts he had in his conscience. When she was at prayer, Christ appeared to her, answered all the archbishop's doubts, and gave him instruction and the measures he should maintain in governing his own house and in governing his subjects in his diocese.

Chapter 12

Christ speaks to his bride and says: "Tell him that if he wishes to be called a bishop in the justice of the divine judgment, he must not imitate me manners and customs of many who are now rulers of the Church. I took on a human body from a virgin in order that by words and deeds I might fulfill the law which, from eternity, had been ordained in the Godhead. I opened the gate of heaven with my heart's blood, and I so illumined the way by my words and deeds that all might use my example

in order to merit eternal life. But truly, the words that I said and the deeds that I did in the world are now almost completely forgotten and neglected. For this, no one is as much a cause as the prelates of the churches. They are full of pride, greed, and the rottenness of bodily pleasure.

All of these things are contrary to my commandments and to Holy Church's honorable statutes, which my friends established out of great devotion after my ascension and after I had accomplished my will in the world. For those wicked prelates of the churches, who are filled with the malignity of an evil spirit, have left to mankind examples that are exceedingly harmful to souls; and therefore it is necessary for me to exact full justice from them by doing judgment on them, abolishing them from the book of life in heaven and placing them beside my enemy Lucifer in hell, in hellish sees that shall be the seat of their perpetual excruciation. Nevertheless, you ought to know that if anyone is willing to amend himself before death by loving me with all his heart and if he abstains from sins, then I will be prompt in showing my mercy.

Tell him also, as if on your own part, these words that follow: 'My Lord, it sometimes happens that, from a black furnace, there goes forth a beautiful flame that is useful and quite necessary for fashioning works of beauty. But that does not mean that the furnace must then be praised for its black color. The praise and honor and thanks are owed to the artist and master of those works.

It is a similar situation with me, unworthy woman that I am, if you find something useful in my advice; for then you ought continually to show infinite thanks and willing service, not to me, but to God himself, who made and makes all things and who has a perfect will to do good. My Lord, I begin by first speaking to you of those things that touch the salvation of many souls. I advise you that, if you would have God's friendship, neither you, nor any other bishop acting on your behalf, should be willing to promote anyone to sacred orders unless he has first been diligently examined by good clerics and has been found to be so suitable in his life and character that, by the testimony of wise and truthful men, he is declared worthy to receive such an office.

With diligent attention, see to it that all the bishops under you and all the suffragans of your archbishopric do the same. For no one could believe how great God's indignation is against those bishops who do not take care to know and diligently to examine the quality of those whom they promote to orders of such dignity in their bishoprics. Whether they do this at the supplication of others or out of negligence and laziness or because of fear, they shall indeed render a most strict account of this at God's judgment.

I also advise you to inquire about the number and the identities of those holders of benefices in your diocese who have the care of souls. Summon them to your presence at least once a year to discuss then with them their own welfare and that of the souls of those under them. And if, by chance, they could not all come together on the same day, then definite dates are to be set on which they may come to you individually during the year so that none of them may be able to excuse himself in any way from consulting you for a whole year.

And you are to preach to them about the kind of life to be led by those who have an office of such great dignity. Know too that priests who have concubines and celebrate Mass are as acceptable and pleasing to God as were the inhabitants of Sodom whom God submersed in hell.

And even though the Mass, in itself, always is the same and has the same power and efficacy, nevertheless, the kiss of peace that such fornicating priests give in the Mass is as pleasing to God as the kiss by which Judas handed over the Savior of all. Therefore constantly try as much as possible, with words and deeds, by enticing or rebuking or threatening, to work together with them so that they may endeavor to lead a chaste life, especially since they must touch so very holy a Sacrament and, with their hands, administer it to other faithful Christians.

Furthermore, for their salvation you should advise all the clergy, both the higher ranks made up of prelates or canons and also the minor clerics - all, that is, who are subject to your rule and have ecclesiastical incomes - that they should correct their lives in every respect. And let no one believe

that, for the sake of avoiding sodomy, fornication is at all permissible for clerics; nor, for that reason, is it to be endured that they should defile themselves with women. For every Christian who has the use of intellect and who does not care about eternal life while he is living, will undoubtedly endure after death the most severe punishments of hell for eternity.

I also advise you that your household should not be too large out of pride, but that it should be well proportioned to the needs of your office as a ruler and to the requirements of your status. Those clerics, therefore, who are called your companions, you should keep with you wherever you may be, for the good of your reputation rather than for vainglory or for pomp; and they are to be few in number rather than many. But of those clerics whom you maintain for no other reason than to sing the divine office or to pursue studies or to teach others or to do writing, you may have as many as you please. And nevertheless it is to your advantage to take diligent care, as best you can, for their correction and for the salvation of their souls.

Be attentive to the rest of your servants so that each has his own task; and if some of them are superfluous, do not keep them out of vainglory lest your heart be elated at having a larger household than your peers. It is also expedient that you always have in mind those truly necessary members of your household whom you keep with you; painstakingly scrutinize their lives like a true householder, correcting their actions, lives, and characters and, with good formation, encouraging and admonishing them in a fatherly way so that they learn to flee from sins and vices and to love God above all things. It is indeed more acceptable to God and more useful to yourself that you keep with you no member of the household who is unwilling to comply with sound advice and humbly amend his transgressions.

Of your clothing, I advise you never to have in your possession more than three pairs at one time; everything beyond this, you should immediately give to God himself. Of bed covers, towels, and tablecloths, keep for yourself only what is necessary and useful to you; and give the rest to God. Of silver vessels, reserve for yourself just enough for your

own person and for the guests who eat at your own table; donate the superfluous pieces to God with a cheerful mind. For the rest of your household and the guests who sit at other tables certainly can, without any embarrassment, eat and drink using vessels of tin, clay, wood, or glass. For that custom which now prevails in the houses of bishops and lords of having an overly excessive abundance of gold and silver is quite harmful to souls and very repulsive to God himself, who, for our sake, subjected himself to all poverty.

Beware, also, of having too many courses and extravagant delicacies. Nor should you have overly large and expensive horses, but rather those that are moderate in size and price. For such large horses are needed by those who expose themselves to the dangers of war for the defense of justice and the protection of life and not for pride. Indeed, I tell you that as often as prelates, out of pride and vainglory, mount big horses, the devil mounts the prelates' necks. For I know a person who, when the prelates and cardinals proudly lifted their feet to ride on the backs of their big horses, saw demons as Ethiopians who then lifted their feet and mounted the necks of the prelates and sat there laughing.

As often as the prelates pompously spurred their horses, the Ethiopians lifted their heads in their glee and kicked their heels into the breasts of those horsemen. Again, I advise you to have your vicars promise under oath that, while carrying out your business, they will not presume to do anything contrary to justice. And if they later do the opposite, you are to have them rebuked in accordance with justice. If you do as I have said, you can be confident that your conscience is quite sound.

And now I give advice for the consolation of the souls of your departed, about whom you asked me whether or not they were in purgatory and what almsdeeds ought to be done for them, etc. I answer and say that every day for one year you are to have two Masses celebrated for them and every day you are to feed two paupers, and every week take care to distribute one florin in coins to the poor.

Say also to the parish priests that they are to correct their parishioners and to rebuke them for their open sins in cases that pertain to them in order that they may be able to live better lives. Those parishioners who are unwilling to be rebuked should then be rebuked by you. If, however, you know that some are openly sinning against God and justice, and if they are such great tyrants that you cannot pass judgment on them, then tell them in sweet and gentle words to correct themselves.

If they do not wish to obey, you may leave them to God's judgment; and God will see that your intention is good. One must not throw the meek lamb into a wolf's ferocious teeth because this will make the wolf more ravenous. Nevertheless, it is fitting for you to forewarn them charitably about the peril of their souls, as a father does with his children when they oppose him. Nor are you bound to forego rebukes out of fear for your body unless, by chance, some danger to souls could come from them.' ”

This revelation, made to Lady Bridget, began in Naples immediately after the death of her son Lord Charles, a knight. The vision continued, with certain breaks, during her Jerusalem voyage until she arrived at Jerusalem; and there it ended in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord. It contains in itself allegations made by the Virgin Mary and by an angel on behalf of the said knight's soul at the divine judgment in the presence of Christ the Judge and allegations made on the devil's part against that very soul and Christ the Judge's verdict for its liberation.

Chapter 13

The Virgin Mary speaks to Lady Bridget and says: ”I want to tell you what I did for the soul of your son Charles when it was being separated from his body. I acted like a woman standing by another woman who is giving birth, in order that she might help the infant, lest it die in the flow of blood or suffocate in that narrow place through which an infant exits and so that, by her watchful care, the infant's enemies, who are in the same house, might not be able to kill it. I acted in the same way.

Indeed I stood near your same son Charles, shortly before he sent forth his spirit, in order that he might not have such thoughts of carnal love in his memory that, for the sake of this love, he would think or say anything against God or will to omit anything pleasing to God or will to perform, to his soul's harm, those things that could be in any way contrary to the divine will.

I also helped him in that narrow space, i.e., at his soul's exit from his body, so that in dying he would not endure pain so hard as to cause him to become at all inconstant through despair, and so that in dying he might not forget God. I also guarded his soul from its deadly enemies, i.e., the demons, so that none of them could touch it. As soon as it had left his body, I took custody of it and defended it. This action quickly routed and dispersed that whole throng of demons who, in their malice, yearned to swallow it and torture it for eternity. But as to how, after the death of Charles, judgment was passed on his soul, this will be shown to you completely when it pleases me.”

SECOND REVELATION ON THE SAME MATTER

After an interval of some days, the same Virgin Mary herself again appeared to the same Lady Bridget, who was wide awake and at prayer and said: ”Through God's goodness, it is now permitted for you to see and hear how judgment was passed on the aforesaid soul when it had left the body. That which then happened in one moment before God's incomprehensible majesty will be shown to you in painstaking detail at intervals by means of corporeal likenesses so that your understanding may be able to grasp it.”

In the same hour, therefore, Lady Bridget saw herself caught up to a certain large and beautiful palace where, upon the tribunal, the Lord Jesus Christ sat as if crowned as an emperor in the company of an infinite host of attendant angels and saints. She saw standing near him his most worthy Mother, who listened carefully to the judgment. Also in the presence of the Judge, a soul was seen standing in great fear and panic, naked as a newborn infant, and, as it were, entirely blind so that it could see nothing;

but in its consciousness, it understood what was being said and done in the palace. An angel stood on the Judge's right side near the soul and a devil on his left. But neither of them touched the soul or handled it.

Then, at last, the devil cried out and said: "Hearken, O most almighty Judge! I complain in your sight about a woman who is both my Lady and your Mother and whom you love so much that you have given to her power over heaven and earth and over all of us demons of hell. She has indeed done me an injustice regarding that soul which now stands here. According to justice, as soon as this soul had left the body, I ought to have taken it to myself and presented it in my company before your court of judgment. And behold, O just Judge: that woman, your Mother, seized this soul with her own hands, almost before it exited from the man's mouth; and in her powerful ward she has brought it to your judgment."

Then Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, answered thus: "Hearken, you devil, to my reply! When you were created, you understood the justice that was in God from eternity and without beginning. You also had free choice to do what most pleased you. And even though you have chosen to hate God rather than love him, nevertheless you still understand quite well what, according to justice, ought to be done. I tell you, therefore, that it was my business, rather than yours, to present that soul before God, the true judge.

For while this soul was in the body it had a great love for me, and in its heart frequently pondered the fact that God had deigned to make me his mother and that he willed to exalt me on high above all created things. As a result he began to love God with such great charity that in his heart he used to say this: 'I so rejoice because God holds the Virgin Mary his Mother most dear above all things, that there is in the world no creature and no bodily delight that I would take in exchange for that joy. No, I would prefer that joy to all earthly delights.

And if it were possible that God could remove her, in the smallest point, from that dignity in which she stands, I would rather choose for myself, in exchange, eternal torture in the depth of hell. Therefore, to God

himself be endless thanksgiving and everlasting glory for that blessed grace and that glory immeasurable that he has given to his most worthy Mother!' Therefore, O devil, see now with what sort of will he passed away. Which now seems to you more just: that his soul come to God's judgment defended by me or that it come into your hands to be tortured without pity?"

The devil answered: "I have no right to expect that this soul, which loves you more than itself, would come into my hands before judgment be passed. But even though, at the bidding of justice, you did him this favor before the judgment, nevertheless, after the judgment his works will condemn him to be punished at my hands. Now, O Queen, I ask you why you drove all of us demons from the presence of his body at his soul's exit so that none of us could cause any horror there or strike any fear into him."

The Virgin Mary answered: "I did this in return for the ardent charity that he had toward my body and in return for the joy that he had from the fact that I am the Mother of God. Therefore I obtained from my Son the favor that, wherever he was and even where he now is, no evil spirit might approach his body."

After this, the devil speaks to the Judge and says: "I know that you are justice and power itself. You do not judge less justly for the devil than for an angel. Therefore adjudge that soul to me! Using the wisdom that I had when you created me, I had written all his sins. Indeed, I had kept watch over all his sins with that malice of mine that I had when I fell from heaven. For when that soul first came to the age of reason and really understood that what it was doing was sinful, its own will then drew it to live in worldly pride and carnal pleasure, rather than resist such things."

The angel answered: "When his mother first understood that his will was wavering toward sin, she immediately rushed to his aid with works of mercy and daily prayers that God might deign to have mercy on him lest he withdraw himself from him. Because of those works of his mother, he finally obtained a godly fear so that, as often as he fell into sin, he immediately hurried to make his confession."

The devil answered, "I must tell his sins." And at the very moment he intended to begin, he immediately started to exclaim and lament and carefully search himself, including his head and all the limbs that he seemed to have; and he was seen to tremble all over; and with great confusion he cried out: "Woe to me in my misery! How have I wasted my long labor? Not only is the text blotted out and ruined, but even the material on which everything was written has burnt up completely. Moreover, the material indicates the times that he sinned. And I do not recall the times any more than the sins written down in connection with them." The angel answered: "This was done by his mother's tears and long labors and many prayers. God sympathized with her sighs and gave to her son this grace: namely, that for every sin he committed, he obtained contrition, making a humble confession out of love for God. Therefore those sins have been blotted out and are unheeded by your memory."

The devil answered, asserting that he still had a sack full of those writings according to which the abovesaid knight had purposed to make amends for his sins but did not take care [to do so and asserting that the writings gave grounds on which] to torture him until, through punishment, satisfaction had been made. And indeed that same knight had not yet taken care to amend those sins during his lifetime. The angel answered: "Open the sack and seek a judgment on those sins for which you must chastise him." At those words, the devil cried out like a madman, saying: "I have been plundered in my power. Not only my sack has been taken, but also the sins that filled it! The sack in which I put all the reasons that I had to punish him was his laziness; for, because of his laziness, he omitted many good things."

The angel answered: "His mother's tears have plundered you and have burst the sack and have destroyed the writing. So greatly did her tears please God!" The devil answered: "I still have here a few things to bring forth: namely, his venial sins."

The angel answered: "He had the intention to make a pilgrimage from his fatherland, leaving his goods and his friends and visiting, by many

labors, the holy places. He complemented these things, furthermore, by so preparing himself that he was worthy to gain an indulgence from Holy Church. Moreover, he desired, by making amends for his sins, to appease God his Creator. As a result, all those charges, which you just said that you had written down, have been pardoned.”

The devil answered: ”Nevertheless, I still must punish him for all those venial sins that he committed; and therefore, through indulgences, they have not been deleted at all. For there are thousands upon thousands of them, and they have all been written on my tongue.” The angel answered: ”Extend your tongue and show the writing.” The devil answered with loud howling and clamor like a maniac; and he said: ”Woe is me. I have not one word to say; for my tongue has been cut off at the root together with its strength!”

The angel answered: ”His mother did this with her continual prayers and her labor; for she loved his soul with her whole heart. Therefore, for the sake of her love, it pleased God to pardon all the venial sins that he committed from his infancy right up to his death; and therefore your tongue is said to have lost its strength.”

The devil answered: ”I still have one thing carefully stored in my heart, and no one can abolish it. This thing is the fact that he acquired some things unjustly and never attended to their restoration.” The angel answered: ”His mother made satisfaction for such things with her alms, her prayers, and her works of mercy so that the rigor of justice inclined toward the mildness of mercy; and God gave him the perfect intention of making full satisfaction - according to his opportunities and without sparing any of his own goods - to all those from whom he had taken anything unjustly. God accepted that intention in place of its effect because he was not well enough to live any longer. Therefore, his heirs must make satisfaction for such things to the extent that they can.”

The devil answered: ”If I therefore do not have the power to punish him for sins, I must nevertheless chastise him because he did not practice good deeds and virtues according to his ability while he had his full senses

and a healthy body. For virtues and good deeds are those treasures that he ought to bring with him to such a kingdom, namely, to the glorious kingdom of God. Permit me therefore, by means of punishment, to supply what he lacks in virtuous deeds.”

The angel answered: ”It is written that, to one who asks, it shall be given and, to one who knocks with perseverance, it shall be opened. Listen then, you devil! By her charitable prayers and pious works his mother has perseveringly knocked at the gate of mercy on his behalf; and, for more than thirty years, she has shed many thousands of tears that God might deign to pour the Holy into his heart so that this same son of hers might willingly offer his goods, his body, and his soul to God's service. And God did so, for that knight became so fervent that it pleased him to live for nothing other than to follow God's will. And behold: God, who had been petitioned for so long a time, did pour his blessed Spirit into his heart.

And the Virgin Mother of God has given to him, out of her own virtue whatever he lacks in those spiritual weapons and garments that are proper for knights who must, in the kingdom of heaven, enter the presence of the highest Emperor. Those saints too, who now have a place in the heavenly kingdom and whom this knight loved during his life in the world, added to his consolation out of their merits. For he himself truly did assemble a treasure as those pilgrims do who daily exchange perishable goods for eternal riches.

And because he did so, he will therefore obtain everlasting joy and honor, especially for his burning desire to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem, and for the fact that he fervently longed to risk his life willingly in warfare so that if he had been a match for so great a work, the Holy Land might be restored to the dominion of Christians to the end that the glorious sepulchre of God might be held in due reverence. Therefore you, O devil, have no right to supply those things that he did not personally accomplish.”

The devil answered: ”Still, he lacks a crown. For if I could devise anything to spoil its perfection, I would willingly do so.” The angel

answered: "It is entirely certain that all who will themselves from hell by truly repenting their sins, by voluntarily conforming themselves to the divine will, and by loving God himself with all their heart, will obtain his grace. And it pleases God himself to give them a crown out of the triumphal crown of his blessed human body if they have been purged according to strict justice. Therefore, it is not at all suitable for you, O devil, to devise anything related to his crown."

When the devil heard this, he cried out impatiently, roaring, and said: "Woe is me. For all my memory has been taken from me! I do not now recall in what respect that knight followed my will; and - what is more amazing - I have even forgotten what name he was called by while he lived."

The angel answered: "Know that now, in heaven, he is called 'Son of Tears.' " The devil cried out loudly and answered: "Oh, what a cursed sow his mother, that she-pig, is, who had a belly so expansive that so much water poured into her that her belly's every space was filled with liquid for tears! Cursed be she by me and by all my company!"

The angel answered: "Your curse is God's honor and the blessing of all his friends." Then, however, Christ the Judge spoke, saying this: "Depart, O devil, my enemy!" Then he said to the knight: "Come, O my chosen one!" And so, at once, the devil fled.

When the bride saw these things, she said: "O Power eternal and incomprehensible, you yourself, God and Lord, Jesus Christ! You pour into hearts all good thoughts and prayers and tears. You conceal your gracious gifts; and for them you confer eternal rewards in glory. Therefore, to you be honor and service and thanks for all that you have created! O my sweetest God, you are most dear to me and truly to me dearer than my body and soul!"

The angel also then spoke to that same bride of Christ and said: "You ought to know that this vision has been shown to you by God not only for your own consolation but also in order that God's friends may be able to

understand how much he deigns to do in answer to the prayers, tears, and labors of his friends who charitably pray and labor for others with perseverance and good will. You also ought to know that this knight, your son, would not have had such a grace if he had not, since infancy, had the will to love God and his friends and to amend his life willingly after every fall into sin.”

Lady Bridget had this revelation in the holy city of Jerusalem, the first time that she was in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In it, Christ declares the pardon and grace that good pilgrims have in the said church when they come there with a right intention and a holy purpose.

Chapter 14

The Son spoke to the bride: ”When you people entered my temple, which was dedicated with my blood, you were as cleansed of all your sins as if you had at that moment been lifted from the font of baptism. And because of your labors and devotion, some souls of your relatives that were in purgatory have this day been liberated and have entered into heaven in my glory. For all who come to this place with a perfect will to amend their lives in accord with their better conscience, and who are not willing to fall back into their former sins, will have all their former sins completely forgiven; and they will have an increase of grace to make progress.”

This vision Lady Bridget saw in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the chapel of Mount Calvary, on the Friday after the octave of the Ascension of the Lord, when, caught up in spirit, she saw the whole passion of the Lord in painstaking detail, as it is here contained at greater length.

Chapter 15

While I was at Mount Calvary, most mournfully weeping, I saw that my Lord, who was naked and scourged, had been led by the Jews to his crucifixion. He was being guarded by them diligently. I then saw too that a certain hole had been cut into the mount and that the crucifiers were round about and ready to work their cruelty. The Lord, however, turned toward me and said to me: "Be attentive; for in this hole in the rock the foot of the cross was fixed at the time of my passion." And at once I saw how the Jews were there fixing and fastening his cross firmly in the hole in the rock of the mount with bits of wood strongly hammered in on every side in order that the cross might stand more solidly and not fall.

Then, when the cross had been so solidly fastened there, at once wooden planks were fitted around the trunk of the cross to form steps up to the place where his feet were to be crucified, in order that both he and his crucifiers might be able to ascend by those plank steps and stand atop the planks in a way more convenient for crucifying him. After this, they then ascended by those steps, leading him with the greatest of mockery and scolding. He ascended gladly, like a meek lamb led to the slaughter. When he was finally on top of those planks, he at once, willingly and without coercion, extended his arm and opened his right hand and placed it on the cross. Those savage torturers monstrously crucified it, piercing it with a nail through that part where the bone was more solid.

And then, with a rope, they pulled violently on his left hand and fastened it to the cross in the same manner. Finally, they extended his body on the cross beyond all measure; and placing one of his shins on top of the other, they fastened to the cross his feet, thus joined, with two nails. And they violently extended those glorious limbs so far on the cross that nearly all of his veins and sinews were bursting.

Then the crown of thorns, which they had removed from his head when he was being crucified, they now put back, fitting it onto his most holy head. It pricked his awesome head with such force that then and there his eyes were filled with flowing blood and his ears were obstructed. And his face and beard were covered as if they had been dipped in that rose-red blood. And at once those crucifiers and soldiers quickly removed all the

planks that abutted the cross, and then the cross remained alone and lofty, and my Lord was crucified upon it.

And as I, filled with sorrow, gazed at their cruelty, I then saw his most mournful Mother lying on the earth, as if trembling and halfdead. She was being consoled by John and by those others, her sisters, who were then standing not far from the cross on its right side. Then the new sorrow of the compassion of that most holy Mother so transfixed me that I felt, as it were, that a sharp sword of unbearable bitterness was piercing my heart. Then at last his sorrowful Mother arose; and, as it were, in a state of physical exhaustion, she looked at her Son. Thus, supported by her sisters, she stood there all dazed and in suspense, as though dead yet living, transfixed by the sword of sorrow. When her Son saw her and his other friends weeping, with a tearful voice he commended her to John. It was quite discernible in his bearing and voice that out of compassion for his Mother, his own heart was being penetrated by a most sharp arrow of sorrow beyond all measure.

Then too, his fine and lovely eyes appeared half dead; his mouth was open and bloody; his face was pale and sunken, all livid and stained with blood; and his whole body was as if black and blue and pale and very weak from the constant downward flow of blood. Indeed, his skin and the virginal flesh of his most holy body were so delicate and tender that, after the infliction of a slight blow, a black and blue mark appeared on the surface. At times, however, he tried to make stretching motions on the cross because of the exceeding bitterness of the intense and most acute pain that he felt. For at times the pain from his pierced limbs and veins ascended to his heart and battered him cruelly with an intense martyrdom; and thus his death was prolonged and delayed amidst grave torment and great bitterness.

Then, therefore, in distress from the exceeding anguish of his pain and already near to death, he cried to the Father in a loud and tearful voice, saying: "O Father, why have you forsaken me?" He then had pale lips, a bloody tongue, and a sunken abdomen that adhered to his back as if he had no viscera within. A second time also, he cried out again in the greatest of

pain and anxiety: "O Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Then his head, raising itself a little, immediately bowed; and thus he sent forth his spirit. When his Mother then saw these things, she trembled at that immense bitterness and would have fallen onto the earth if she had not been supported by the other women. Then, in that hour, his hands retracted slightly from the place of the nail holes because of the exceeding weight of his body; and thus his body was as if supported by the nails with which his feet had been crucified. Moreover, his fingers and hands and arms were now more extended than before; his shoulder blades, in fact, and his back were as if pressed tightly to the cross.

Then at last the Jews standing around cried out in mockery against his Mother, saying many things. For some said: "Mary, now your Son is dead"; but others said other mocking words. And while the crowds were thus standing about, one man came running with the greatest of fury and fixed a lance in his right side with such violence and force that the lance would have passed almost through the other side of the body. Thus, when the lance was extracted from the body, at once a stream, as it were, of blood spurted out of that wound in abundance; in fact, the iron blade of the lance and a part of the shaft came out of the body red and stained with the blood. Seeing these things, his Mother so violently trembled with bitter sighing that it was quite discernible in her face and bearing that her soul was then being penetrated by the sharp sword of sorrow.

When all these things had been accomplished and when the large crowds were receding, certain of the Lord's friends took him down. Then, with pity, his Mother received him into her most holy arms; and sitting, she laid him on her knee, all torn as he was and wounded and black and blue. With tears, she and John and those others, the weeping women, washed him. And then, with her linen cloth, his most mournful Mother wiped his whole body and its wounds. And she closed his eyes and kissed them; and she wrapped him in a clean cloth of fine linen. And thus they escorted him with lamentation and very great sorrow and placed him in the sepulchre.

Christ complains to the bride about all the earth's princes and prelates because they will not keep in their memory and recall in their heart these his sorrows and his passion and because they will not consider those sacred places of the Holy Land; and he threatens them if they do not amend themselves.

Chapter 16

After this, in that same hour, Christ spoke to his same bride, Lady Bridget, saying: "To these things that you have now seen and to the other things that I endured, the world's princes are not attentive; nor do they consider the places in which I was born and I suffered. For they are like a man who has a place designated for wild and untamed beasts and where he sets loose his hunting dogs and takes delight in gazing at the dogs and the wild things as they run.

It is a similar case with the princes of the earth and the prelates of the churches and all states of the world. They gaze at earthly delights with greater eagerness and pleasure than at my death and my passion and my wounds. Therefore, I shall now send them my words through you; and, if they do not change their hearts and turn them toward me, they will be condemned along with those who divided my clothing and, over my garment, cast lots."

ADDITION

Here follows a revelation made to blessed Bridget in Famagusta. The Son speaks: "This city is Gomorrah, burning with the fire of lust and of superfluity and of ambition. Therefore its structures shall fall, and it shall be desolated and diminished, and its inhabitants shall depart, and they shall groan in sorrow and tribulation, and they shall die out, and their shame shall be mentioned in many lands because I am angered at them."

Concerning the duke, who was privy to his brother's death. Christ speaks: "This man boldly expands his pride. He boasts of his incontinence and is not attentive to the things that he has done to his neighbor. Therefore, if he does not humble himself, I will act in accord with the

common proverb: 'No lighter wails he who afterward weeps than he who wailed afore.' For he shall have a death no lighter than his brother's - no, a death more bitter - unless he quickly amends himself."

Concerning the duke's confessor. Christ speaks: "What did that friar say to you? Did he not say that the duke is good and cannot live in a better way? Did he not excuse the duke's incontinence? Such men are not confessors but deceivers. They go about like simple sheep, but they are more truly foxes and flatterers. Such are those friends who see and propose 'assumptions and dejections' to human beings for the sake of some temporal trifle. Therefore if that friar had sat in his convent, he would have obtained less punishment and a greater crown. Now, however, he will not escape the hand of one who rebukes and afflicts."

Certain people advised the lady to change clothes and blacken faces because of the Saracens. Christ speaks: "What advice are they giving you? Is it not to disguise your clothes and blacken your faces? Would I, God, who instruct you, truly be like someone who does not know the future or like someone powerless who fears all things? Not in the least! But I am wisdom itself and power itself, and I foreknow all and can do all. Therefore retain your accustomed manner of clothing and faces, and entrust your wills to me. For I, who saved Sarah from the hands of her captors, will also save all of you on land and sea and will provide for you in a way that is to your advantage."

Concerning a bishop. The Mother speaks: "My friend ought to love you as a mother, as a lady, as a daughter, and as a sister. As a mother, because of your age and because of the advice that he must seek. Second, as a lady, because of the grace given to you by God, who through you has shown the secrets of his wisdom. Third, as a daughter, by teaching and by consoling and by providing you with more useful things. Fourth, as a sister, by reproving - when this would be opportune - and by admonishing and by inciting to more perfect things through words and examples. Also, tell him that he ought to be like one who carries the best of flowers.

These flowers are my words, which are sweeter than honey to those who savor them, sharper and more penetrating than arrows, and more effective in remuneration. It is therefore the duty of the bearer to protect the flowers from the wind, the rain, and the heat: namely, from the wind of worldly talk; from the rain of carnal delights; from the heat of worldly favor. For one who glories in such things causes the flowers to become worthless and shows himself unsuitable to carry them.”

Concerning the queen of Cyprus. The Son speaks: ”Advise the queen not to return to her native land for this is not to her advantage. But let her stay in the place in which she has been set, serving God with all her heart. Second, she is not to marry, taking a second husband, for it is more acceptable to God to weep for the things that have been done and, by penance, to make up for time that has been uselessly spent. Third, she should guide the people of her kingdom toward mutual concord and charity; and she should labor that justice and good morals be laudably maintained and that the community not be weighed down with unusual burdens. Fourth, for God's sake, she should forget the evils that were committed against her husband and not burn for revenge.

For I am the Judge, and I shall judge for her. Fifth, she should nurture her son with divine charity and appoint as his councilors men who are just and not covetous, and as members of his household, men who are modest, composed, and wise, from whom he may learn to fear God, to rule justly, to sympathize with the unfortunate, to flee from flatterers and sycophants like poison, and to seek the advice of just men, even if they are poor, lowly, or despised. Sixth, she is to put down the shameful custom of women involving tight clothing, display of the breasts, unguents, and many other vanities; for these are things entirely hateful to God.

Seventh, she should have a confessor who, having left the world, loves souls more than gifts and who neither glosses over sins nor fears to reprove them. And, in those things that pertain to the salvation of the soul, she is to obey him just as she obeys God. Eighth, she should seek out and be attentive to the lives of holy queens and saintly women; and she is to labor for the increase of God's honor. Ninth, she should be reasonable in

her gifts, avoiding both debts and the praises of men, for it is more acceptable to God to give little or even nothing than to contract debts and to defraud one's neighbor.”

On the crowning of the new king. The Son speaks: ”It is a great burden to be a king, but also a great honor and a very great enjoyment. It is fitting, therefore, that a king be mature, experienced, prudent, just, and a hard worker who loves his neighbors' welfare more than his own will. Therefore, in ancient times, kingdoms were well ruled when such a man was elected as king - one who had the will and the knowledge and the ability to rule with justice. Now kingdoms are not kingdoms but scenes of childishness, folly, and brigandage. For just as the brigand searches for ways and times to lay his ambush in order to acquire lucre without being marked, so kings now search for inventions by which to elevate their offspring, fill their purses with money, and discreetly burden their subjects. And they all the more gladly do justice in order to obtain temporal good, but they do not love justice in order to obtain everlasting reward.

Therefore, a wise man wisely said: 'Woe to that kingdom whose king is a child who lives daintily and has dainty flatterers but feels no anguish at all about the advancement of the community.' But because this boy will not bear his father's iniquity, therefore, if he wishes to make progress and to fulfill the dignity of his kingly name, let him obey my words that I have already spoken concerning Cyprus.

And let him not imitate the behavior of his predecessors, but let him lay aside childish levity and lead a kingly life, having assistants of the sort who fear and who do not love his gifts more than his soul and his honor, who hate flatteries, and who are not afraid to speak the truth and to follow it and to assert it. Otherwise, the boy will have no joy in his people, and his people no joy in the one elected.”

When Lady Bridget was in Jerusalem, she was doubtful as to whether it were better for her to lodge in the monastery of the Friars Minor on Mount Zion or in the pilgrims' hostel in Jerusalem; and then the Virgin Mary appeared to her at prayer and told her that she should lodge in the hostel as a good example to others.

Chapter 17

The Mother of God speaks: "In that place on Mount Zion there are two kinds of human beings. Some love God with all their heart. Others want to have God, but the world is sweeter to them than God is. And therefore, so that the good may not be scandalized and so that you may not give an occasion to the lukewarm or an example to the future, it is therefore better to reside in the place appointed for pilgrims. For my Son will provide for you in all things as it pleases him."

In the kingdom of Cyprus, Lady Bridget was asked by Lady Eleanor, the queen of the said kingdom, to pray to God for her son the king and for that kingdom. Lady Bridget then crossed over to Jerusalem; and there one day, while she was at prayer, Christ appeared to her and spoke to her these counsels, which she was to write to the said king and to his paternal uncle, the prince of Antioch. And he instructed her to write those things to them as if from herself and not from the part of Christ.

Chapter 18

The bride writes to the king of Cyprus and to the prince of Antioch: "The first counsel is that each of you, in the presence of his confessor, is to make a clean and complete confession of all the things that he has done against the will of God; and thus you are to receive the blessed Body of our Lord Jesus Christ with fear and love of God. The second counsel is that both of you are to be united in true love so that you may be one heart toward God and his honor, ruling the kingdom for the honor of God and the good of your subjects.

The third counsel is that both of you are to be united in true charity with your subjects and that, solely out of reverence for the passion and death of Jesus Christ, you are to forgive and spare all who, by advice, deed, or approbation, cooperated in the death of your father King Peter. Include them in your charity with all your heart in order that God may

deign to include you in his mercy and also that he may will to strengthen you to rule the kingdom for his honor.

The fourth counsel is that, since divine providence has appointed you the governors of the kingdom, you should use all possible diligence in speaking to all the prelates, both of the churches and of the religious orders, effectively but charitably advising them that they and their subjects should all correct themselves in all those matters in which they have in any way deviated spiritually or temporally from the holy state of their predecessors, the holy fathers of earlier times, and that they should quickly return to living purely in the pristine state of their predecessors, so that their state may be totally reformed in order that they and their subjects, having thus truly amended their lives, may obtain God's friendship and be made worthy to pray that God may mercifully deign to renew in holiness of virtues the state of the universal Church.

The fifth counsel is that, for the sake of that great charity with which God has loved your souls, you should will to love the souls of your subjects, advising your military people that all who have in any way offended God should quickly and humbly correct themselves, and that all who are under obedience to the Roman Church and who have reached the age of reason should humbly exercise the practice of confession; that they should reconcile themselves to those neighbors they have offended and establish a concord with them; and that, having amended their lives, they should receive the awesome Body of Christ.

Thereafter, moreover, they are to lead a Catholic life: namely, living faithfully in marriage or in widowhood or even in the state of praiseworthy virginity; observing all that Holy Church teaches; leading, with loving heart, the members of their household and their domestics and their subjects and all others possible, by their good example and by word and deed, to do the same; and strengthening those in such states by their good admonitions. And know for very certain that all who are not willing to obey in these matters will suffer the cost in body and soul.

The sixth counsel is that you should tell all prelates that they must effectively and frequently admonish all their clerics, namely, the rectors of churches, that each of them is to inquire diligently in his parish as to whether there be any of his parishioners who persist in living wickedly in public sins, causing offense to God and contempt for Holy Mother Church.

Any such people whom they find living impudently in their public sins, they are to forewarn with effective admonishments concerning the peril of their souls; and they are to teach them such measures and spiritual remedies by means of which they can and must humbly amend their lives. If, however, some of those who live in public sins will not humbly obey, then the same rectors must not delay in reporting to their superiors and the bishops in order that the prelates may juridically correct the forwardness of such obstinate persons by means of an ecclesiastical censure.

If, in fact, because of the sinners' stubbornness and pride or because of their temporal power, the aforesaid bishops and prelates are unable to correct or punish them, then you, my lords, are advised to be, with your powerful hands, co-workers with the lord prelates so that by your help the said sinners may be brought to correct themselves and that having amended their lives they may attain God's mercy."

A revelation made to Lady Bridget in the holy city of Jerusalem concerning the kingdom of Cyprus and its reformation, which she herself transmitted to the lord king and to the prince of Antioch that they might publish it to the whole kingdom. And because the aforesaid prince did not put complete faith in that revelation, therefore the said lady, on her return trip from Jerusalem, published it in the city of Famagusta on the eighth day of October, in the presence of the said lord king and the queen and the said prince and all the royal council.

Chapter 19

It happened to a person who was wide awake and absorbed in prayer that while she was suspended in an ecstasy of contemplation, she saw herself caught up in spirit to a palace that was of incomprehensible size

and indescribable beauty. And it seemed to her that Jesus Christ was sitting among his saints on the imperial seat of majesty. He opened his blessed mouth and uttered these words that are noted down below:

”I truly am supreme charity itself; for all things that I have done from eternity, I have done out of charity; and, in the same way, all things that I do and shall do in the future proceed entirely from my charity. For charity is as incomprehensible and intense in me now as it was at the time of my passion when, through my death and out of exceeding charity, I freed from hell all the elect who were worthy of this redemption and liberation. For if it were still possible that I might die as many times as there are souls in hell so that for each of them I might again endure such a death as I then endured for all, my body would still be ready to undergo all these things with a glad will and most perfect charity. But, in fact, it is now impossible that my body could once more die or suffer any pain or tribulation. And it is also just as impossible that any soul that after my death has been or will be condemned to hell would ever again be freed from there, or would enjoy the heavenly gladness that my saints and chosen ones enjoy at the glorious sight of my body.

No, the damned will feel the pains of hell in an everlasting death because they did not will to enjoy the benefit of my death and passion and did not will to follow my will while they lived in the world. However, because no one is judge over the offenses done to me except myself, and, for this reason, my charity that I have ever shown to human beings makes its complaint in the presence of my justice, it therefore pertains to justice to render judgment on this in accord with my will.

Now I make my complaint about the inhabitants of the kingdom of Cyprus as if about one human being. But I do not complain about my friends who dwell there and who love me with all their heart and follow my will in all things; but I speak in complaint, as if to one person, to all those who scorn me and always resist my will and so very greatly oppose me. And therefore I now begin to speak to them all as if to one.

O people of Cyprus, my adversary, listen and be diligently attentive to what I say to you! I have loved you as a father loves his only son, whom he has willed to exalt to all honor. I conferred on you a land in which you could have in abundance all things necessary for the sustenance of your body. I sent to you the warmth and light of the Holy Spirit that you might understand the right Christian faith to which you faithfully bound yourself, humbly subjugating yourself to the sacred statutes and to the obedience of Holy Church.

Indeed, I placed you in a place that would be quite fitting for a faithful servant, namely, among my enemies, so that in return for your earthly labors and for the physical struggle of battles you would obtain in my heavenly kingdom an even more precious crown. I also carried you for a long time in my heart, i.e., in the charity of my Godhead, and kept you as the apple of my eye in all your adversities and tribulations. And as long as you observed my precepts and faithfully kept obedience and the statutes of Holy Church, then, of a certainty, did an almost infinite number of souls come from the kingdom of Cyprus to my heavenly kingdom to enjoy eternal glory with me for ever.

But because you now do your own will and all those things that delight your heart, without fearing me who am your Judge and without loving me who am your Creator and who also redeemed you through my very hard death; and because you spat me out of your mouth like some foul and unsavory thing; and, indeed, because you have enclosed the devil together with your soul in the chamber of your heart; and because you have driven me thence as if I were a thief and a robber; and because you were no more ashamed to sin in my sight than irrational animals are in their mating, it is therefore a fitting justice and a just judgment that you should be driven out from all my friends in heaven and be placed forever in hell amidst my enemies.

And know this without a doubt: that my Father - who is in me, and I am in him, and the Holy Spirit is in us both - is himself my witness that nothing but truth has ever gone forth from my mouth. Wherefore know for a truth that if anyone has been so disposed as you now are and if he will

not amend his life, his soul will go the same way along which went Lucifer because of his pride, and Judas, who sold me because of his greed, and Zimri, whom Phinehas killed because of his lust. For Zimri sinned with a woman against my precept; and therefore, after his death, his soul was condemned to hell.

Wherefore, O people of Cyprus, I now announce to you that if you will not correct yourself and amend your life, then I shall so destroy your generation and progeny in the kingdom of Cyprus that I shall spare neither the poor person nor the rich. Indeed, I shall so destroy this same generation of yours that in a short time, your memory will thus slip away from the hearts of human beings as if you had never been born in this world. Afterward, however, it is my pleasure to, plant new plants in this kingdom of Cyprus that will carry out my precepts and will love me with all their heart.

But, nevertheless, know for a certainty that if anyone of you wills to correct himself, amend his life, and humbly turn back to me, then like a loving shepherd, I shall joyfully run out to meet him, lifting him onto my shoulders and personally carrying him back to my sheep. For by my shoulders I mean that if anyone amends his life, he will share in the benefit of my passion and death, which I endured in my body and shoulders; and he will receive with me eternal consolation in the kingdom of heaven.

You should also know for very certain that you, my enemies who dwell in this said kingdom, were not worthy that such a vision or divine revelation of mine should be sent to you. But some friends of mine who live in the same kingdom and faithfully serve me and love me with their whole heart have, by their labors and tearful prayers, inclined me to make you understand, by means of this my revelation, the grave peril of your souls. For, to some of my said friends there, it has been divinely shown by me how many countless souls from this said kingdom of Cyprus are being excluded from heavenly glory and are being eternally doomed to the death of Gehenna.

However, the above words I speak to those Latin Christians subject to the obedience of the Roman Church, and who, at baptism, vowed to me right Roman Catholic faith, and who, through works contrary to me, have totally withdrawn from me. Greeks, however, who know that all Christians must hold only one Catholic Christian faith and be under only one Church, namely, the Roman, and have, as spiritual pastor over them, only my sole vicar general in the world, namely, the supreme Roman pontiff, and who, nevertheless, will not spiritually subject and humbly subjugate themselves to that same Roman Church and to my vicar because of their stubborn pride or because of greed or because of the wantonness of the flesh or because of some other thing that pertains to the world, are unworthy to obtain pardon and mercy from me after death.

But the other Greeks, who would desirously wish to know the Roman Catholic faith, but cannot, and who nevertheless, if they knew it and had the ability, would willingly and devoutly receive it and would humbly subjugate themselves to the Roman Church and who, nonetheless, following their conscience in their state and faith in which they are, do abstain from sin and live piously - to such as these, after their death, I must show my mercy in the matter of punishment when they are called to my judgment.

Let the Greeks also know that their empire and kingdoms or domains will never stand secure and tranquil in peace, but that they themselves will always be subject to their enemies from whom they will always sustain the gravest of losses and daily miseries until, with true humility and charity, they devoutly subject themselves to the Church and faith of Rome, totally conforming themselves to the sacred constitutions and rites of that same Church.”

When, however, these things had thus been seen and heard in spirit as reported above, the said vision disappeared; and the said person remained at prayer, suspended in no little fear and wonder.

In the kingdom of Cyprus, a certain Friar Minor asked the said lady to advise him as to what he ought to do about some doubts in his conscience, especially concerning the observance of the Rule of his order. When indeed the lady was praying for the abovesaid friar one day in the holy city of Jerusalem, Christ appeared to her and spoke to her, saying many things about the Order of Friars Minor. And at the end he threatens all property-owning religious with everlasting death.

Chapter 20

Infinite thanksgiving and humble service, praise, and honor be to God in his power and everlasting majesty - to him who is one God in three persons! It pleased his immense goodness that his most worthy humanity should speak to a person at prayer, saying this:

"Hear, O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritual things; and diligently hold in your memory these my words. There was a man named Francis. When he turned away from worldly pride and covetousness and from the flawed delight of the flesh and turned toward a spiritual life of penance and perfection, he then obtained true contrition for all his sins and a perfect intention of amendment, saying: 'There is nothing in this world that I am not willing to give up gladly for the sake of the love and honor of my Lord Jesus Christ. There is also nothing so hard in this life that I am not willing to endure it with gladness because of his love, doing all that I can for the sake of his honor, according to my strength in body and soul. And I want to lead and strengthen all others that I can to love God above all with the whole of their heart.'

The Rule of this Francis, which he himself began, was not dictated and composed by his human understanding and prudence, but by me in accord with my will. For every word that is written in it was breathed into him by my Spirit; and afterwards, he brought that Rule forth and held it out to others. So too, all other Rules that my friends began and themselves personally kept and observed and effectively taught and held out to others were not dictated and composed by their own understanding and human wisdom, but by the breathing of that same Holy Spirit. For a number of years, the brothers of this Francis - who are called Friars Minor - held and

kept that Rule of his well and very spiritually and devoutly, in whole accordance with my will.

As a result, the devil, the ancient fiend, felt great envy and unrest because he had not the strength to conquer the said friars by his temptations and deceits. Therefore, the devil sought diligently that he might find a man whose human will he could mix together with his own malign spirit. At last he found a cleric who inwardly thought thus: 'I would like to be in a state where I could have worldly honor and my bodily pleasure and where I could amass so much money that I would lack nothing at all that pertains to my needs and pleasures. Therefore, I wish to enter the Order of Francis; and I will pretend to be very humble and obedient.' And so, with that intention and will, the aforementioned cleric entered the said order; and at once the devil entered into his heart. And thus the said cleric became a friar in the said order.

Inwardly, however, the devil considered in this manner: 'Just as Francis with his humble obedience wishes to draw many from the world to receive great rewards in heaven, so this my friar - who will be named 'Adversary' because he will be the adversary of the Rule of Francis - will draw many in the Order of Francis from humility to pride, from rational poverty to covetousness, from true obedience to the doing of one's own will and to the pursuit of bodily pleasure.'

And when the aforesaid Brother Adversary entered the Order of Francis, at once, at the devil's instigation, he began to think inwardly thus: 'I will show myself so humble and obedient that all will reckon me a saint. When the others are fasting and keeping silence, then I, with special companions, shall do the contrary: namely, by eating and drinking and talking so secretly that none of the others will know or understand this. Also, according to the said Rule, I cannot lawfully touch money or possess gold or silver; therefore I will have some special friend to keep my money and gold secretly with him on my behalf so that I may use that money as I will.'

I also want to learn the liberal arts and science, so that from them I may be able to have some honor and dignity in the order, having horses and silver vessels and handsome clothes and costly ornaments. And if anyone reproves me for these things, I shall answer that I do it for the honor of my order, if besides, I could work further and do so much that I would be made a bishop, then I would truly be happy and blessed in such a life as I then could lead, for then I would enjoy my personal freedom and I would have all my bodily pleasure.'

Now hear what the devil had done in the aforesaid Order of Francis. For it is truly so that in the world the friars who, either in action or in will and desire, hold the aforesaid Rule that the devil taught to Brother Adversary, are more numerous than those who keep the Rule that I myself taught to Brother Francis. You should nevertheless know that however much those friars - namely, those of Francis and those of Brother Adversary - are mixed together as long as they live in the world, I will nevertheless separate them after death, for I am their Judge. And I shall judge that those friars of the Rule of Francis are to remain with me, together with Francis, in everlasting joy. But those who belong to Brother Adversary's Rule will be doomed to eternal punishments in the depth of hell if before death they would not will to correct themselves and humbly amend their lives.

Nor is this to be wondered at, for those who ought to give examples of humility and sanctity to worldly human beings actually furnish them with vile and ribald examples through their pride and covetousness. And therefore both the said friars themselves and all other religious who are prohibited by rule from having private property and yet have some property against their Rule, and who wish to appease me by conferring upon me a part of it, should know for very certain that their gifts are abominable to me and hateful and unworthy of any good gift in return. For it is more agreeable and pleasing to me that they diligently observe the blessed poverty that they professed according to their Rules, than that they might present to me all the gold and silver and even all the metals that there are in the world.

You, O woman who hear my words, should also know that it would not have been permitted for you to know this aforespoken vision if it had not been for a good servant of mine who sincerely petitioned me with all his heart on behalf of that Friar Minor, and who, out of divine charity, desired to give to that same friar some advice useful to his soul.”

When, however, these things had been seen and heard, this vision disappeared.

A vision that Lady Bridget had in Bethlehem, where the Virgin Mary showed to her the whole manner of her childbearing and how she gave birth to her glorious Son just as the Virgin herself had promised the same Lady Bridget in Rome fifteen years before she went to Bethlehem as can be seen in the first chapter of this book.

Chapter 21

When I was at the manger of the Lord in Bethlehem, I saw a Virgin, pregnant and most very beautiful, clothed in a white mantle and a finely woven tunic through which from without I could clearly discern her virginal flesh. Her womb was full and much swollen, for she was now ready to give birth. With her there was a very dignified old man; and with them they had both an ox and an ass. When they had entered the cave, and after the ox and the ass had been tied to the manger, the old man went outside and brought to the Virgin a lighted candle and fixed it in the wall and went outside in order not to be personally present at the birth.

And so the Virgin then took the shoes from her feet, put off the white mantle that covered her, removed the veil from her head, and laid these things beside her, remaining in only her tunic, with her most beautiful hair - as if of gold - spread out upon her shoulder blades. She then drew out two small cloths of linen and two of wool, very clean and finely woven, which she carried with her to wrap the infant that was to be born, and two other small linens to cover and bind his head; and she laid these cloths beside her that she might use them in due time.

And when all these things had thus been prepared, then the Virgin knelt with great reverence, putting herself at prayer; and she kept her back toward the manger and her face lifted to heaven toward the east. And so, with raised hands and with her eyes intent on heaven, she was as if suspended in an ecstasy of contemplation, inebriated with divine sweetness. And while she was thus in prayer, I saw the One lying in her womb then move; and then and there, in a moment and the twinkling of an eye, she gave birth to a Son, from whom there went out such great and ineffable light and splendor that the sun could not be compared to it. Nor did that candle that the old man had put in place give light at all because that divine splendor totally annihilated the material splendor of the candle.

And so sudden and momentary was that manner of giving birth that I was unable to notice or discern how or in what member she was giving birth. But yet, at once, I saw that glorious infant lying on the earth, naked and glowing in the greatest of neatness. His flesh was most clean of all filth and uncleanness. I saw also the afterbirth, lying wrapped very neatly beside him. And then I heard the wonderfully sweet and most dulcet songs of the angels. And the Virgin's womb, which before the birth had been very swollen, at once retracted; and her body then looked wonderfully beautiful and delicate.

When therefore the Virgin felt that she had now given birth, at once, having bowed her head and joined her hands, with great dignity and reverence she adored the boy and said to him: "Welcome, my God, my Lord, and my Son!" And then the boy, crying and, as it were, trembling from the cold and the hardness of the pavement where he lay, rolled a little and extended his limbs, seeking to find refreshment and his Mother's favor. Then his Mother took him in her hands and pressed him to her breast, and with cheek and breast she warmed him with great joy and tender maternal compassion.

Then, sitting on the earth, she put her Son in her lap and deftly caught his umbilical cord with her fingers. At once it was cut off, and from it no liquid or blood went out. And at once she began to wrap him carefully, first in the linen cloths and then in the woolen, binding his little body, legs, and

arms with a ribbon that had been sewn into four parts of the outer wollen cloth. And afterward she wrapped and tied on the boy's head those two small linen cloths that she had prepared for this purpose.

When these things therefore were accomplished, the old man entered; and prostrating on the earth, he adored him on bended knee and wept for joy. Not even at the birth was that Virgin changed in color or by infirmity. Nor was there in her any such failure of bodily strength as usually happens in other women giving birth, except that her swollen womb retracted to the prior state in which it had been before she conceived the boy. Then, however, she arose, holding the boy in her arms; and together both of them, namely, she and Joseph, put him in the manger, and on bended knee they continued to adore him with gladness and immense joy.

A revelation in Bethlehem at the manger of the Lord, on the same matter as above.

Chapter 22

Afterwards again in the same place, the Virgin Mary appeared to me and said: "My daughter, it is a long time ago that I promised you in Rome that I would show to you here in Bethlehem the manner of my childbearing. And even though I showed to you in Naples something about this - namely, what state I was in when I gave birth to my Son - nevertheless, know for very certain that I was in such a state and gave birth in such a manner as you have now seen: on bended knee, praying alone in the stable. For I gave birth to him with such great exultation and joy of soul that I felt no discomfort when he went out of my body, and no pain. But at once I wrapped him in the small clean cloths that I had prepared long before.

When Joseph saw these things, he marveled with great gladness and the joy from the fact that I had thus, without help, given birth. But because the great multitude of people in Bethlehem were busy about the census, they were therefore so attentive to it that the wonders of God could not be

publish among them. And therefore know for a truth that however much human beings, following their human perception, try to assert that my Son was born in the common manner, it is nevertheless more true and beyond any doubt that he was born just as I elsewhere told you and just as you now have seen.”

It was at the manger of the Lord that this revelation was made to the same lady in Bethlehem: how the shepherds came to the manger to adore the newborn Christ.

Chapter 23

I saw also in the same place, while the Virgin Mary and Joseph were adoring the boy in the manger, that shepherds and guardians of the flock then came to see and adore the infant. When they had seen it, they first wished to inquire whether it were male or female because the angels announced to them that the Savior of the world had been born and had not said ”savioress.” Therefore the Virgin Mother then showed to them the infant's natural parts and male sex; and at once they adored him with great reverence and joy; and afterward they returned praising and glorifying God for all these things that they had heard and seen.

This revelation she had in Bethlehem, in the chapel where Christ was born. In it, Mary tells her how the three magi kings adored Christ, her Son.

Chapter 24

The same Mother of the Lord also said to me: ”My daughter, know that when the three magi kings came into the stable to adore my Son, I had foreknown their coming well in advance. And when they entered and adored him, then my Son exulted, and for joy he had then a more cheerful face. I too rejoiced exceedingly; and I was gladdened by the wonderful joy of exultation in my mind, while being attentive to their words and actions, keeping those things and reflecting on them in my heart.”

The Mother of God, speaking to Lady Bridget, tells her some things about her own humility and that of her Son; and she says that just as she and her Son were humble while they were in the world, so too are they humble now although they are in heaven.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: "There is the same humility in my Son now in the power of his Godhead as there was then, when he was laid in the manger. Although he knew all things in accordance with his Godhead, nevertheless, while lying between two animals, he spoke nothing at all, in accordance with his humanity. So too now, sitting at the right hand of the Father, he hears all who speak to him with love; and he answers through infusions of the Holy Spirit. To some he speaks with words and thoughts, to others as if from mouth to mouth, just as it pleases him.

Similarly, I, who am his Mother, am, in my body which has been raised on high above all things created, now as humble as I then was when I was betrothed to Joseph. Moreover, you ought to know for very certain that before Joseph betrothed me, he understood, in the Holy Spirit, that I had vowed my virginity to God and that I was immaculate in thought, word, and deed. He betrothed me with the intention that he might serve me, treating me as his lady, not as his wife.

I too in the Holy Spirit knew for very certain that my virginity would remain forever unharmed even though, as a result of God's hidden plan, I was being betrothed to a husband. But after I gave my consent to the messenger of God, Joseph, seeing my womb swell by virtue of the Holy Spirit, feared very greatly. Not suspecting me of anything sinister, but mindful of the sayings of the prophets who had foretold that the Son of God would be born of a virgin, he reckoned himself unworthy to serve such a mother until the angel instructed him in his sleep not to be afraid but to serve me with charity.

But of our riches, Joseph and I reserved nothing for ourselves except the necessities of life, for the honor of God. The rest we let go, for the love of God. When my Son's hour of birth was at hand - an hour that I very well knew beforehand - I came, in accord with God's foreknowledge, to Bethlehem, bringing with me, for my Son, clean clothing and cloths that no one had ever used before. In them I wrapped, for the first time, him who was born from me in all purity.

And even though from eternity it was foreseen that I would sit in honor on a most sublime seat above all creatures and above all human beings, yet nonetheless, in my humility, I did not disdain to prepare and serve the things that were necessary for Joseph and myself. Similarly also, my Son was subject to Joseph and to me. Therefore, just as I was humble in the world - known to God alone and to Joseph - so too am I humble now as I sit on a most sublime throne, ready to present to God the rational prayers of all. But some I answer by means of divine outpourings. To others, however, I speak more secretly as is well pleasing to God."

When Lady Bridget now wished to return from Jerusalem to Rome, she went on the birthday of the Virgin Mary to visit her sepulchre and the other shrines that are there near the city of Jerusalem. As she prayed at the said sepulchre, that same Virgin appeared to her, assuring her about the time of her death and assumption and testifying that this was literally her sepulchre.

Chapter 26

When I was in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, praying at the sepulchre of the glorious Virgin, that same Virgin appeared to me, shining with exceeding splendor, and said: "Be attentive, daughter! After my Son ascended to heaven, I lived in the world for fifteen years and as much time more as there is from the feast of the ascension of that same Son of mine until my death. And then I lay dead in this sepulchre for fifteen days.

Thereupon I was assumed into heaven with infinite honor and joy. However, my garments with which I was buried then remained in this

sepulchre; and I was then clothed in such garments as those that clothe my Son and my Lord, Jesus Christ. Know also that there is no human body in heaven except the glorious body of my Son and my own body. "Therefore go now, all of you, back to the lands of Christians; ever amend your lives for the better; and in future, live with the greatest of care and attention now that you have visited these holy places, where my Son and I lived in the body and died and were buried."

When Lady Bridget, in returning from Jerusalem, passed through the city of Naples, at the request of the lady queen and of the archbishop of the said city she prayed to God for that same city's inhabitants. And Christ, speaking to her, reproved the aforesaid inhabitants for their too many sins, showing to them the means by which sinners might reconcile themselves to him, promising them mercy if they would be reconciled and would amend their lives. He also threatens them with the severity of justice if they will not correct themselves but rather persevere in sin. Lady Bridget published this revelation herself in the presence of the said Lord Bernard the archbishop and three masters of theology and two doctors of canon and civil law and some knights and citizens of the said city.

Chapter 27

To a person who was wide awake at prayer and absorbed in contemplation - and while she was in a rapture of mental elevation - Jesus Christ appeared; and he said to her this: "Hear, O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritual things; and be diligently attentive; and in your mind beware in regard to those things that you now will hear and that in my behalf you will announce to the nations, lest you speak them to acquire for yourself honor or human praise. Nor indeed are you to be silent about these things from any fear of human reproach and contempt; for these things that you are now going to hear are being shown to you not only for your own sake, but also because of the prayers of my friends.

For some of my chosen friends in the Neapolitan citizenry have for many years asked me with their whole heart - in their prayers and in their labors on behalf of my enemies living in the same city - to show them

some grace through which they could be withdrawn and savingly recalled from their sins and abuses. Swayed by their prayers, I give to you now these words of mine; and therefore diligently hear the things that I speak.

I am the Creator of all and Lord over the devils as well as over the angels, and no one will escape my judgment. The devil, in fact, sinned in a threefold manner against me: namely, through pride; through envy; and through arrogance, i.e., through love of his own will. He was so proud indeed that he wished to be lord over me and that I should be subject to him. He also envied me so much that if it were possible, he would gladly have killed me in order to be lord himself and sit on my throne. Indeed, his own will was so dear to him that he cared nothing at all about my will so long as he could perform his own will. Because of this, he fell from heaven; and, no longer an angel, he became a devil in the depth of hell.

Afterward, however, I, seeing his malice and the great envy that he had toward humankind, showed my will and gave my commandments to human beings that by doing them they could please me and displease the devil. Finally, because of the charity that I have toward human beings, I came into the world and took flesh of a virgin. Indeed, I personally taught them the true way of salvation by work and by word; and to show them perfect charity and love, I opened heaven for them by my own blood.

But what are those human beings who are my enemies doing to me now? In truth, they have contempt for my precepts; they cast me out of their hearts like a loathsome poison; indeed, they spit me out of their mouths like something rotten; and they abhor the sight of me as if I were a leper with the worst of stench. But the devil and his works they embrace in their every affection and deed. For they bring him into their hearts, doing his will with delight and gladness and following his evil suggestions. Therefore, by my just judgment they shall have their reward in hell with the devil eternally without end.

For in place of the pride that they practice, they will have confusion and eternal shame to such a degree that angels and demons will say of them: 'They are filled with confusion to the very utmost!' And for their

insatiable greed, each devil in hell will so fill them with his deadly venom that in their souls there will remain no place that is not filled with diabolic venom. And for the lust with which they burn like senseless animals, they will never be admitted to the sight of my face but will be separated from me and deprived of their inordinate will.

Moreover, know that just as all mortal sins are very serious, so too a venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it with the intention of persevering. Wherefore, know that two sins, which I now name to you, are being practiced and that they draw after them other sins that all seem as if venial. But because the people delight in them with the intention of persevering, they are therefore made mortal, and the people in the city of Naples commit many other abominable sins that I do not wish to name to you.

The first of the two sins is that the faces of rational human creatures are being painted with the various colors with which insensible images and statues of idols are colored so that to others, these faces may seem more beautiful than I made them. The second sin is that the bodies of men and women are being deformed from their natural state by the unseemly forms of clothing that the people are using. And the people are doing this because of pride and so that in their bodies they may seem more beautiful and more lascivious than I, God, created them.

And indeed they do this so that those who thus see them may be more quickly provoked and inflamed toward carnal desire. Therefore, know for very certain that as often as they daub their faces with antimony and other extraneous coloring, some of the infusion of the Holy Spirit is diminished in them and the devil draws nearer to them. In fact, as often as they adorn themselves in disorderly and indecent clothing and so deform their bodies, the adornment of their souls is diminished and the devil's power is increased.

O my enemies, who do such things and with effrontery commit other sins contrary to my will, why have you neglected my passion; and why do you not attend in your hearts to how I stood naked at the pillar, bound and

cruelly scourged with hard whips, and to how I stood naked on the cross and cried out, full of wounds and clothed in blood? And when you paint and anoint your faces, why do you not look at my face and see how it was full of blood? You are not even attentive to my eyes and how they grew dark and were covered with blood and tears, and how my eyelids turned blue.

Why too do you, not look at my mouth or gaze at my ears and my beard and see how they were aggrieved and were stained with blood? You do not look at the rest of my limbs, monstrously wounded by various punishments, and see how I hung black and blue on the cross and dead for your sake. And there, derided and rejected, I was despised by all in order that, by recalling these things and attentively remembering them, you might love me, your God, and thus escape the devil's snares, in which you have been horribly bound.

However, in your eyes and hearts, all these things have been forgotten and neglected. And so you behave like prostitutes, who love the pleasure and delight of the flesh, but not its offspring. For when they feel a living infant in their womb, at once they procure an abortion by means of herbs and other things so that without losing their fleshly pleasure and further wicked delight, they may thus be always absorbed in their lust and their foul carnal intercourse. This is how you behave. For I, God, your Creator and Redeemer, visit all with my grace, knocking, namely, at your hearts, because I love all.

But when you feel, in your hearts, any knock of an inpouring - namely of my Spirit - or any compunction; or when, through hearing my words, you conceive any good intention, at once you procure spiritually, as it were, an abortion, namely, by excusing your sins and by delighting in them and even by damnably willing to persevere in them. For that reason, you do the devil's will, enclosing him in your hearts and expelling me in this contemptible way. Therefore, you are without me, and I am not with you. And you are not in me but in the devil, for it is his will and his suggestions that you obey.

And so, because I have just spoken my judgment, I shall also now speak my mercy. My mercy, however, is this: namely, that none of my very enemies is so thorough or so great a sinner that my mercy would be denied him if he were to ask for it humbly and wholeheartedly. Wherefore, my enemies must do three things if they wish reconcile themselves to my grace and friendship. The first is that with all their heart they repent and have contrition because they have offended me, their Creator and Redeemer. The second thing is confession - clean, frequent, and humble - which they must make before their confessor.

And thus let them amend all their sins by doing penance and making satisfaction in accord with that same confessor's council and discretion. For then I shall draw close to them, and the devil will be kept far away from them. The third thing is that after they have thus performed these things with devotion and perfect charity, they are to go to communion and receive and consume my Body with the intention of never falling back into former sins but of persevering in good even to the end.

If anyone, therefore, amends his life in this manner, at once I will run out to meet him as a loving father runs to meet his wayward son; and I will receive him into my grace more gladly than he himself could have asked or thought. And then I will be in him, and he in me; and he shall live with me and rejoice forever. But upon him who perseveres in his sins and malice my justice shall indubitably come. For when the fisherman sees the fish in the water playing in their delight and merriment, even then he drops his hook into the sea and draws it out, catching the fish in turn and then putting them to death - not all at once, but a few at a time - until he has taken them all.

This is indeed what I shall do to my enemies who persevere in sin. For I shall bring them a few at a time to the consummation of the worldly life of this age in which they take temporal and carnal delight. And at an hour that they do not believe and are living in even greater delight, I shall then snatch them away from earthly life and put them to eternal death in a place where they will nevermore see my face because they loved to do and accomplish their inordinate and corrupted will rather than perform my will

and my commandments.” However, after these things had thus been seen and heard, this vision disappeared.

A revelation of the Virgin Mary which Lady Bridget had in the city of Naples. And she directs it to Lord Bernard, the Neapolitan archbishop. The revelation reproaches those who do not instruct their servants or infidel slaves, newly converted to the faith, in that same Catholic faith and Christian law. The Virgin Mary also reproves those masters who maltreat these said servants of theirs and exasperate them beyond measure. She also threatens with great punishment fortune-tellers and enchanters and diviners and also those who support them and put faith in them.

Chapter 28

The bride of Christ writes to Lord Bernard, archbishop of Naples, saying: ”Reverend Father and Lord! When that person, whom you know well, was praying suspended in a rapture of contemplation, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said to her this:

‘I, who speak to you, am the Queen of heaven. I am, as it were, a gardener of this world. For when a gardener sees the rise of a strong wind harmful to the little plants and the trees of his garden, at once he runs to them quickly and binds them fast with sturdy stakes as well as he can. And thus he comes to their aid, in various ways according to his ability, lest they be broken by the rushing wind or wretchedly uprooted.

I, the Mother of mercy, do the same in the garden of this world. For when I see blowing on the hearts of human beings the dangerous winds of the devil's temptations and wicked suggestions, at once I have recourse to my Lord and my God, my Son Jesus Christ, helping them with my prayers and obtaining from him his outpouring of some holy infusions of the Holy Spirit into their hearts to prop them up and savingly confirm them that they may be kept spiritually uninjured by the diabolic wind of temptations lest the devil prevail against human beings, breaking their souls and plucking them up by the stem in accord with his wicked desire.

And thus when, with humility of heart and active compliance, human beings receive these said stakes of mine and my assistance, at once they are defended against the diabolic onslaught of temptations; and remaining firm in the state of grace, they bear for God and for me the fruit of sweetness in due season. But as for those who scorn the aforesaid spiritual stakes of my Son and me and are swayed by the wind of temptations through consent to the devil and through action, they are uprooted from the state of grace and, through illicit desires and deeds, are led by the devil even to the profound and eternal pains and darkness of hell.

Now, however, know that in the Neapolitan citizenry many different horrible and secret sins are being committed which I am not relating to you. But instead I am speaking to you now about two kinds of open sins that greatly displease my Son and me and all the heavenly court.

The first sin is the fact that in this said city many buy pagans and infidels to be their slaves and that some masters of those slaves do not bother to baptize them and do not want to convert them to the Christian faith. And even if some of them are baptized, their masters bother no more, after the slaves' baptism, to have them instructed and trained in the Christian faith or to train them in the reception of the Church's sacraments than they did before the slaves' baptism and conversion. And so it results that the said convert slaves, after accepting the faith, commit many sins and do not know how to return to the sacraments of penance and communion or how to be restored in the state of salvation and of reconciliation with God and of grace.

Moreover, some keep their female servants and slaves in extreme abjection and ignominy, as if they were dogs - selling them and, what is worse, frequently exposing them in a brothel to earn money that is a disgrace and an abomination. Others, in fact, keep them in their own houses as prostitutes both for themselves and for others; and this is extremely abominable and hateful to God and to me and also to the whole heavenly court.

Some other masters so grieve and exasperate these said servants of theirs with abusive words and blows that some of the said servants come to

a state of despair and want to kill themselves. Indeed these sins and acts of negligence much displease God and all the heavenly court.

For God himself loves them because he created them; and to save all, he came into the world, taking flesh from me, and endured suffering and death on the cross. Know too that if anyone buys such pagans and infidels with the intention of making them Christians and wants to instruct and train them in the Christian faith and virtues and intends, during his life or at his death, to set these slaves at liberty so that the said slaves may not pass to his heirs, such a master of slaves merits much by this and is acceptable in the sight of God. But know for very certain that those who do the contrary will be heavily punished by God.

The second kind of sin is that many men and women, with various inordinate marks of respect, keep about them and consult wicked fortune-tellers and diviners and the most evil of enchantresses. For sometimes they ask them to perform witchcraft and incantations in order that they may be able to conceive and beget children. Others require them to perform incantations and to make fetishes that will cause certain men and women, or even their temporal lords, to be enamored of them to the point of distraction and to love them with all their heart. Others, in fact, beg foreknowledge of the future from these same accursed witches.

Many others ask them to give them health in their infirmities through their art of enchantment and witchcraft. All indeed who keep these same warlock diviners or enchantresses in their households and at their own expense and all who seek from such people such wicked advice and diabolic remedies, and, indeed, all those same warlock diviners and enchantresses who promise the things mentioned above - all are cursed and hateful in the sight of God.

As long as they persevere in such a state and purpose, no infusion or grace of the Holy Spirit will ever descend or enter into their hearts. But nevertheless, if they repent and humbly amend their lives with the true purpose of not falling back again, they will obtain grace and mercy from my Son.' ”

However, when these things had thus been heard, this vision disappeared.

A certain bishop, who was the ruler of the March of Ancona on behalf of the holy Roman Church, asked Lady Bridget about the fact that he was pricked in conscience on the grounds that he was absent and too remote from his diocese because of his aforesaid office in the marquisate where he resided, and thus could not attend to the sheep entrusted to him in his diocese. And he wondered, therefore, whether it would be more pleasing to God that he reside in his office in the marquisate or that he return to rule the sheep entrusted to him in his diocese. And when at this request the abovesaid lady prayed for the aforementioned bishop, then Christ appeared to her and said to her the words that are contained below.

Chapter 29

Blessed be God forever for all his bounties! Amen. My Lord, most reverend Father, first of all I humbly recommend myself to you. You have written to me with humility that I, a woman unknown to you, should humbly pray to God for you. To this I reply and tell you truthfully, according to my conscience, that I am inadequate for such a task: being a sinner, alas, and unworthy. You have also written to me that I should write to you some spiritual advice for the salvation of your soul. And therefore God, attending to your faith and humility, willed with devoted fatherly love to satisfy your desires and faith and was attentive, not to my sins, but to the heartfelt affection of his humble petitioner.

For when I, a sinner unworthy of doing so, was praying for you on the preceding day to my Lord Jesus Christ, he then appeared to me in spirit and spoke with me, using a similitude and saying this: "O you, to whom it has been given to hear spiritually and to see, be attentive now and know for very certain that all bishops and abbots and also all the other ecclesiastical prelates and benefice-holders who have the care of souls and who leave their churches and my sheep, which have been entrusted to them, and who receive and hold other offices and positions of rulership with the intention and purpose that in these offices they may be more

honored by human beings and may be exalted and raised to a higher status in the world, then, even though in those offices these rulers neither steal nor plunder anything nor commit any other injustice, nevertheless, because they glory and delight in those offices and honors and, for this reason, leave my sheep and their churches, they are, in doing such things, to my eyes like pigs dressed in pontifical or sacerdotal ornaments.

This situation might be expressed by means of the following similitude: There was a great lord who had invited his friends to supper. And at the hour of the supper, those pigs - dressed as above - entered into the palace in the sight of that lord and in the sight of the banqueters who sat at the table. The lord, however, wished to give to them some of those precious foods on his table; but then the aforesaid pigs cried out with a loud sound, grunting their opposition with their pig voices and refusing to eat those precious foods, although they were avidly eager to eat, in their usual way, the cheap husks meant for pigs.

Then, however, when that lord saw and understood this, he loathed their vileness and filth; and at once he said to his servants with great wrath and indignation: 'Expel them from my palace and cast them forth to be refreshed and sordidly sated with the pigs' husks of which they are worthy! For they are neither willing nor worthy to eat of my foods, which have been prepared for my friends.' "

By these things, my most reverend Father and Lord, I then understood in spirit that this is what you must do: namely, that you must decide in your own conscience whether or not those sheep of Christ, namely, those entrusted to you in your bishopric, are being well and spiritually ruled in your absence. If in your absence they are being well ruled in accord with what is spiritually appropriate to their souls' advantage and benefit, and if furthermore you see that by ruling the March you can do God greater honor and be more useful to souls than in your own bishopric, then indeed I say that you can quite lawfully stay in your office as ruler of the March in accord with the will of God, provided that it is neither desire for honor nor empty glorying in that office that seduces you into staying there.

If, in fact, your conscience dictates to you the contrary, then I advise you to leave that office of the marquise and go back to reside personally in your own church and in the bishopric entrusted to you: namely, in order to rule those sheep of yours, or rather, of Christ, specially entrusted to you and to feed them by word, example, and work, not negligently and faultily like a wicked hireling, but carefully and virtuously like a true and good shepherd.

Be forbearing with me, my Lord, in that I, although an ignorant woman and an unworthy sinner, write such things to you. I ask of him, our true and good Shepherd, who deigned to die for his sheep, that he may bestow on you the Holy Spirit's grace, by which you may worthily rule his sheep and always do his glorious and most holy will, even till death.

The Judge complains to the bride about the universal number of sinners of all states and conditions, narrating the good deeds that he did for them and their ingratitude.

He also threatens them with the terrible sentence of his wrath. Nevertheless, he admonishes them to be converted to him; and he will receive them with mercy, like a father.

Chapter 30

I saw a grand palace like the serene sky. In it was the host of the heavenly army, innumerable as the atoms of the sun and having a gleam as of the sun's rays. But in the palace, on a wonderful throne there sat, as it were, the person of a human being, a Lord of incomprehensible beauty and immense power; his clothes were wonderful and of inexpressible brightness. And before him who sat on the throne there stood a Virgin who was more radiant than the sun.

All those of the heavenly host, who stood nearby, reverently honored her as the queen of heaven. But then he who sat on the throne opened his mouth and said: "Hearken, all you my enemies who live in the world; for to my friends who follow my will, I am not speaking. Hearken, all you clerics: archbishops and bishops and all of lower rank in the Church!

Hearken, all you religious, of whatever order you are! Hearken, you kings and princes and judges of the earth and all you who serve!

Hearken, you women: princesses and all ladies and maidservants! All you inhabitants of the world, of whatever condition or rank you are, whether great or small, hearken to these words that I myself, who created you, now speak to you! I complain because you have withdrawn from me and have put faith in the devil, my enemy. You have abandoned my commandments and you follow the will of the devil and you obey his suggestions.

You do not attend to the fact that I, the unchanging and eternal God, your Creator, came down from heaven to a Virgin and took flesh from her and lived with you. Through my own self, I opened the way for you and showed the counsels by which you might go to heaven. I was stripped and scourged and crowned with thorns and so forcefully extended on the cross that, as it were, all the sinews and joints of my body were being undone. I heard all insults and endured a most contemptible death and most bitter heartache for the sake of your salvation.

To all these things, O my enemies, you are not attentive because you have been deceived. Therefore you bear the yoke and burden of the devil with false sweetness and neither know nor feel them before the approach of sorrow over the interminable burden. Nor is this enough for you; for your pride is so great that if you could ascend above me, you would gladly do it. And the pleasure of the flesh is so important to you that you would more gladly forfeit me than give up your inordinate delight.

Moreover, your greed is as insatiable as a sack with a hole in it; for there is nothing that can satisfy your greed. Therefore, I swear by my Godhead that if you are to die in the state in which you now are, you shall never see my face; but for your pride you shall sink so deeply into hell that all the devils will be above you, afflicting you beyond all consolation. Indeed, for your lust you shall be filled with horrible diabolic venom; and for your greed you shall be filled with sorrow and anguish; and you shall be partakers of all the evil that there is in hell.

O my enemies - abominable and ungrateful and degenerate - I seem to you, as it were, a worm dead in winter. Therefore, you do whatever things you will, and you prosper. Therefore, I will arise in summer and then you shall be silent, and you shall not escape my hand. But nevertheless, O my enemies, because I have redeemed you with my blood and because I am in quest of naught but your souls, therefore return to me even now with humility and I will gladly receive you as my children. Shake off from you the devil's heavy yoke and recall my charity and you shall see in your conscience that I am sweet and meek.”

In Rome Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, foretelling to her the day and manner of her death and ordering what should be done with the books of revelations. He also says that when he so pleases, there will be many in the world who will receive them with devotion and who will obtain his grace. The Lord also makes arrangements concerning the body of his bride and where it ought to be buried.

Chapter 31

It happened five days before the day of the passing of Lady Bridget, the often-mentioned bride of Christ, that our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in front of the altar that stood in her chamber. He showed himself with a joyful face and said to her: ”I have done to you what a bridegroom usually does, concealing himself from his bride so that he may be more ardently desired by her. Thus I have not visited you with consolations during this time; for it was the time of your testing.

Therefore, now that you have already been tested, go forward and prepare yourself; for now is the time for the fulfillment of that which I promised you: namely, that before my altar you shall be clothed and consecrated as a nun. And henceforth you shall be counted, not only as my bride, but also as a nun and a mother in Vadstena. Nevertheless, know that you will lay down your body here in Rome until it comes to the place prepared for it. For it pleases me to spare you from your labors and to accept your will in place of the completed action.”

And having turned toward Rome, he said as if making a complaint: "O my Rome, O my Rome, the pope scorns you and does not attend to my words but accepts the doubtful in place of the certain. Therefore he shall hear my pipe no more; for he makes the time of my mercy dependent on his own choice."

Then he said to the bride: "As for you, however: tell the prior to hand over all these words of mine, in all the revelations, to the brothers and to my bishop, to whom I shall give the fervor of my Spirit and whom I shall fill with my grace. And know that when it so pleases me, those human beings will come who, with sweetness and joy, will receive those words of the heavenly revelations that up until now have been made to you; and all the things that have been said to you will be accomplished.

And although my grace has been withdrawn from many because of their ingratitude, nevertheless others will come who will arise in lieu of them and who will obtain my grace. But among the very last words of the revelations made to you, put that common and universal revelation that I gave to you in Naples. For my judgment shall be carried out on all the nations who do not humbly return to me, as it has there been shown to you."

However, after these and many other things not written here had been said, the bride of Christ made mention of and arrangements for some persons living with her and whom, before death, she said she had seen in God's presence.

After those things had been heard, the Lord added these words: "On the morning of the fifth day, after you have received the sacraments, call together one by one the persons who are present and living with you and whom I have just now named to you and tell them the things that they must do. And thus, amidst these words and their hands, you will come to your monastery, i.e., into my joy; and your body will be placed in Vadstena."

Then, as the fifth day approached, at the moment of dawn, Christ appeared to her again and consoled her. But when Mass had been said and after she had received the sacraments with very great devotion and reverence, in the hands of the aforesaid persons she sent forth her spirit.

Book 8

We don't have all chapters in Book 8 yet.

After our Lady had sent many revelations to a king, at last she sent him one and said that it should be the last letter that should be sent to him. But in this revelation following, our Lady spoke again to the same king and declared her first statement and informed Saint Bridget why the words of God are spoken so darkly that they may have diverse ways of being understood. Here is also shown the blessed Trinity under the likeness of a pulpit; and of three beams of three diverse colors; and of the judgement of three kings, of which one was alive, another was in Hell, and the third in Purgatory.

Chapter 48

The Mother of God speaks to the Bride and says: "Daughter, I told you before that that should be my last letter that should be sent to the king, my friend; that is to be understood of those things which touch his singular person and mine. For if a man heard a useful thing sung about his friend, and he sat and heard it in order to tell it to him, whether it were a song of mirth or a letter of wholesome criticism, both he who wrote it and he who sung it would be worthily rewarded. Right so the Justice of God, judging in justice and justifying in mercy, will sing of justice and mercy. And therefore whoever will hear, let him hear.

For it is no letter of criticism, but a song of justice and charity. Sometimes when a letter was sent to someone, it contained warnings and criticism; for it blamed unkindness of benefits and warned and stirred to conversion and the amending of manners. But now the justice of God sings a fair song, that belongs to those whoever hear it, believe it, and receive it indeed, that he shall find fruit of health and fruit of endless life.

But you might ask why the words of God are said so darkly that they may be diversely understood and sometimes they are otherwise understood

of God and other times of men. I answer: God is like to a man who makes burning wine. For this man has many pipes, some going up and some down, by which the wine runs now up and now down through the working of the heat of the fire until it is made perfectly. Right so does God in his words, for sometimes he goes up by justice, and sometimes he comes down by mercy; as it is shown in King Isaac, to whom, I say, the prophet said out of justice that he should die, and yet afterwards mercy gave him many years of life.

Sometimes also God comes down by simple showing of words bodily expressed, but he goes up again by spiritual understanding; as it was in David, to whom many things were said under the name of Solomon which were understood and fulfilled in the Son of God. Sometimes also God speaks of things to come as if they were things past, and touches both things present and things to come; for all things, both present, past, and to come, are in God as one point. And you ought not to marvel though God speaks in diverse ways, for it is done for five reasons.

First, that God should show his great mercy, that no man hearing the justice of God should despair of his mercy. For when a man changes the will of sin, then God changes the strictness of his sentence. The second cause is that they who give faith to the justice and to the promises of God should be crowned and rewarded the more largely for faith and constancy. The third cause is that if the counsel of God were known in a certain time, some should be greatly troubled by that, knowing of contrary cases, and others for weariness should cease in their fervor and desire.

And therefore when I write any words to anyone, it is not expressed to you in the conclusion whether the words shall be received and be believed with the effect of them or not. Nor is it declared to you whether he shall believe and fulfill the words in deed or not, for it is not lawful to you to know it. The fourth cause is that no one should presume bodily to discuss the words of God, because he makes him low who is high, and of one he makes a second. The fifth cause is that he who seeks occasion to depart from God may find it, and those who are foul will be more foul, and the good be made more knowledgeable”.

After this, the Son of God spoke to Saint Bridget and said: "If a man spoke by a pipe that had three holes and said to the hearer, you shall never hear my voice by this hole, he would not be blamed though he spoke afterwards by the other two holes. So it is now in our speech; for though the Virgin my Mother said that should be the last letter to be sent to the king, that is to be understood of his person. But now I, God, who am in the Mother and the Mother in me, send my messenger to the king, as well as for them who are now at present alive as for them who are not yet born.

For justice and mercy are endless in God, for eternally this justice was in God, that while God was, before Lucifer, full of wisdom of goodness and of power, he would that many should be partners in his goodness. And therefore he made angels; of which some, beholding their fairness, desired to be above God: And therefore they fell and are made under the feet of God wicked fiends. And yet in them God in a manner has mercy; for when the fiend by the justice and permission of God fulfilled the evil that he wanted, he is as it were in a manner comforted by the prosperity of his malice.

Not that the pain of the fiend is lessened thereby; but as a sick man who has a most strong enemy is comforted by hearing of his death, though the pain of his sickness is not lessened by that hearing, so the fiend of envy, wherein he is hotly burning, rejoices and is glad when God does justice against men; for the thrust of his malice is in a manner refreshed and eased. But after the fall of the fiends, God, seeing the lack in his army, made man, that he should obey his precepts and bring forth fruit, until as many men and women were ascended into heaven as angels fell out of heaven.

Therefore man was made perfect; who, when he had taken the commandment of life, paid no heed to God nor to his power. But consenting to the suggestion of the fiend, he trespassed, saying, 'Let us eat of the Tree of Life, and we shall know all things, good and evil'. Thus Adam and Eve would not harm God, as would the fiend; neither would they be above God, but they would be as wise as God. And they fell, but

not as did the fiend; for the fiend had envy of God, and his wretchedness shall never end. But man would other than God would that he should will, and therefore he deserved and suffered justice with mercy.

Then felt they justice when they had nakedness for clothing of glory, and hunger for plenty, stirring of the flesh for virginity, dread for security, and labour for rest. But soon they obtained mercy; that is to say, clothing against nakedness, food against hunger, security through coming together for the increasing of mankind. Truly, Adam was of most honest life, in that he had no wife but Eve, nor other woman but her alone. Also, God has showed justice and mercy to the beasts, for God has made three worthy things: first, angels who have spirit but no body, second, man who has a soul and a body; third, beasts which have bodies but no souls as man has.

Therefore an angel, because he is spirit, cleaves continually to God and needs no man's help. But man, because he is flesh, may not cleave continually to God, until the mortal body be separated from the soul. And therefore, that man may live, God has made to his help unreasonable beasts to obey and serve him better. And upon these unreasonable beasts God has great mercy, for they have no shame of their members nor sorrow of death until it comes. And they are content with simple living.

Also after the Flood of Noah was passed, God did justice with mercy. For God might well have brought well the people of Israel into the Land of Promise in a short while. But it was right that the vessels that might hold the best drink should first be proved and purged and afterwards sanctified. To whom also God did great mercy, for by the prayers of one man, who was Moses, their sin was taken away and the grace of God given to them. In the same way, after my Incarnation, justice is never used without mercy nor mercy without justice”.

Then there followed a voice on high, saying; ”O Mother of mercy, Mother of the eternal king, purchase your mercy; for to you are come the prayers and tears of your servant, the king. We know very well that it is rightful that his sins are punished, but be merciful so that he maybe converted and do penance and reverence to God”.

Then answered our Lord Jesus Christ and said: "There is fourfold justice in God. The first is that he who is made and is without end shall be worshipped above all things; for of him and in him all things live and have their being. The second justice is that to him who always was and is and was born in time, in time before prophesied, to do service to all; and for that he is loved in all cleanness. The third justice is that he who of himself may not suffer but of his manhood was made able to suffer; and in the mortality that he took upon himself has earned for man immortality, to be desired by man above all things that may be desired or are to be desired. The fourth justice is that they who are unstable should seek true stability, and they who are in darkness desire light, that is, the Holy Spirit, asking his help with contrition and true meekness.

But of this king, the servant of my Mother, for whom mercy is now asked, justice says that his time is not sufficient to purge worthily, as justice demands, the sins that he has done against God's mercy, so that his body might not suffer the pain that he has deserved for his sins. Nevertheless the mercy of the Mother of God has deserved and obtained mercy for the same, her servant, that he shall hear what he has done and how he may make amends, if he will in time be concerned and converted".

"Then after that", said Saint Bride, "I see in Heaven a house of marvelous fairness and greatness. And in that house was a pulpit and in the pulpit a Book. And I see two standing before the pulpit; that is to say, an angel and the fiend.

Of which the one, that is, the fiend, spoke and said: 'My name', he said, 'is Wailaway. For this angel and I follow one thing that is desirable to us; for we see the Lord's most mighty plans to build a great thing. And therefore we labour; the angel for the perfection of the thing, and I to the destruction of the same. But it happens that when that desirable thing comes sometimes into my hands, it is so fervent and hot that I may not hold it; and when it comes into the hands of the angel, it is so cold and slippery that soon it slides out of his hands'.

And when I, said Saint Bridget, behold carefully with all consideration of my mind the same pulpit, my understanding is not allowed to conceive it as it was, that my soul might not comprehend the fairness of it, nor my tongue express it. For the appearance of the pulpit was as if it had been the sunbeam, having a red color and a white color and a shining color of gold. The golden color was as the bright sun. The white color was as snow, most white. And the red color was as a rose. And each color was seen in the other. For when I beheld the gold color, I see within it the white and red color. And when I see the white color, I see in it the other two colors. And when I behold the red color, I see in it the white and golden color. So that each color was seen in the other, and yet each was distinct from the others and by itself; and no color was before the other, nor after the other, nor less than the other, nor more than the other; but over all and in all things they seemed even.

And when I looked upwards, I might not comprehend the length and the breadth of the pulpit; and looking downward, I might not see nor comprehend the greatness nor the deepness of it, for all was incomprehensible to the consideration. After this I see a Book in the same pulpit, shining like most bright gold, that had the shape of a book. Which Book, and the Scripture of it, was not written with ink, but each word in the book was alive and spoke itself, as if a man should say, do this or that, and soon it was done with speaking of the Word. No man read the Scripture of that Book, but whatever that Scripture contained, all was seen in the pulpit and in the three colors.

Before this pulpit I see a king who was alive in the world; and on the left side of the pulpit I see another king who was dead and in Hell; and on the right side I see the third king who was in Purgatory. The said king who was alive sat crowned as if it had been a vessel of glass closed about. Above that glass hung a horrible sword with three edges, continually drawing nearer to that glass as does a gnomon in a sun dial draw near to its mark. On the right side of the same king stood an angel who had a vessel of gold and his lap open. And on his left side stood a fiend who had a pair of tongs and a hammer. And both the angel and the fiend strove which of

their hands should be nearer the vessel of glass when the three-edged sword should touch and break it.

'Then I heard the horrible voice of the fiend, saying: 'How long shall this be? For we both follow one prayer, and do not know who shall overcome'.

Then soon the Justice of God spoke to me and said: 'These things that are shown to you are not physical but spiritual. For neither angel nor fiend have bodies; but they are shown to you in such a manner, because you may not understand spiritual things but through a physical likeness. This living king appears to you as if in as it were a vessel of glass, for his life is but as it were frail glass and suddenly to be ended; the three-edged sword is death, for when it comes it does three things.

It enfeebles the body, it changes the conscience, and it departs it from all strength, separating as by a sword the soul from the body. That the angel and the fiend seem to strive about the glass means that either of them desires to have the king's soul, which shall be accorded to him to whose counsel he is most obedient. That the angel has a vessel and a lap means that just as a child rests in his mother's lap, so does the angel labour that the soul be presented to God as if it were in a vessel and rest in the lap of endless comfort.

That the fiend has tongs and a hammer means that the fiend draws the soul to him with the tongs of wicked delight and breaks it asunder with the hammer; that is, with the consent and commission of sin. That the vessel of glass is sometimes very hot and sometimes very cold and slippery means the inconstancy and instability of the king; for when he is tempted he thinks thus: 'Though I know well that I offend God, if I fulfill now the conceit of my heart, yet at this time I shall fulfill my conceit in deed'. And so knowingly he sins against his God, for as he sins so knowingly he comes into the hands of the fiend. Afterwards the king makes his confession contritely, and so he escapes the hands of the fiend and comes into the power of the good angel. And therefore, unless the king leave his inconstancy, he stands in great peril, for he has a feeble foundation'.

After this I saw on the left side of the pulpit the dead king who was damned to Hell clad in kingly array and sitting as if on a throne. But he was dead and pale and very fearful to look upon. Before his face was as if it were a wheel that had four lines to the outermost part; and this wheel turned about at the breathing and blowing of the king. And each of the four lines went upward and downward as the king would, for the moving of the wheel was in the king's power.

The three lines had writing but in the fourth line was written nothing. On the right side of this king I saw an angel as if like a most beautiful man, whose hands were empty; but he served the pulpit. On the left side of the king appeared a fiend whose head was like a dog's; his womb might not be filled, his navel was open and boiled out venom, colored with all manner of venomous colors. And on each foot he had three claws, great, strong and sharp.

Then there was one who shone more brightly than the sun, that for brightness was marvelous to see. And he said to me: 'This king whom you see is full of wretchedness, whose conscience is now shown to you as he was in his kingdom, and what state he was in when he died. What his conscience was or how he came to his kingdom you do not need to know. Nevertheless, know that his soul is not before your eyes, but his conscience. And for the soul and the fiend are not physical but spiritual, therefore the fiend's temptations and torments are shown you through physical aspects'.

Then soon that dead king began to speak, not of his mouth, but as if it had been from his brain, and said: 'O you, my counsellors, this is my will, that whatever is subject to the crown of my realm, I will hold it and keep it. I will also labour that the things that I have be increased and not lessened. But in what wise those things were obtained, that I hold, what is it to me to inquire? It is enough to me if I may defend and increase the things that I have'.

Then cried the fiend and said: 'See, it is throughout. What shall my hook do?' Justice answered out of the Book that was in the pulpit, saying

to the fiend: 'Put your hook into the hole and draw it towards yourself'. And as soon as the Word of Justice was spoken, the hook was put in. But with it at the same moment a hammer of mercy came before the king with which the king could have smitten away the hook, if he would have inquired into the truth of all things and fruitfully have changed his will. Then spoke the same king again and said: 'O, my counselors and my men, you have me as your lord, and I have taken you as my counselors. Therefore I tell you that there is a man in my realm who is a traitor to my worship and of my life, who lies in wait to hinder my realm and to disturb the peace and the common people of the realm'. In this, said the king, 'there has been given proof from both learned and unlearned, both lords and common people, believing the words that I said to them, in so much that that man whom I defamed of treason took great harm and shame, and sentence of exile was passed against him.

Nevertheless, my conscience knows well what the truth was in all this deed, and I know well that I said many things against that man out of ambitiousness for the kingdom and for dread of losing it, and that my fame should be spread abroad, and that the realm should cleave more surely to me and to my successors. I thought also myself that though I knew the truth as to how the kingdom was obtained, and what wrong was done to him, yet if I receive him again into favor and tell the truth, then all reproach and harm shall fall upon myself. And therefore I firmly set my heart that I would rather die than tell the truth or revoke my wrong words and deeds'.

Then said the fiend: 'O Judge, see how the king gives me his tongue'.

'The Justice of God answered: 'Put down your snare'. And when the fiend had done so, soon there hung before the king's mouth a most sharp blade, with which he might if he would have cut away the snare and entirely broken it. Then spoke the same king and said: 'O my counselors, I have counseled with clerks and learned men of the state of the realm, and they say to me that if I should resign the realm into other men's hands I should do harm to many, and be a traitor to their lives and goods and a breaker of the law of justice; and therefore that I might keep the kingdom and defend it from enemies, we must think of and imagine some new

things, for the old rents of the exchequer are not sufficient to govern and to defend this realm.

And thus I thought of new impositions of taxes and of guileful exactions to be imposed upon the realm, both to the harm of them dwelling in it and of innocent people traveling through it and merchants. And in these devices I planned to continue until my death, although my conscience told me that they were against God, against all justice, and against common honesty'.

Then cried the fiend and said: 'O Judge, see how this king has bowed both his hands under my vessel of water. What shall I do?'

Justice answered out of the Book: 'Put your venom on it'. And soon as the venom of the fiend was put on his hands, there came before the king a vessel of ointment with which the king might well have halted that venom.

Then the fiend cried out loudly and said: 'I see a marvelous thing that passes my ability to understand. For my hook is put to the heart of the king, and then there is given a hammer to his bosom. My snare is put into his mouth, and there is offered to him a most sharp blade. My venom is poured on his hands, and there is given to him a vessel of ointment'.

Justice answered out of the Book of the pulpit and said: 'All things have their time; and Mercy and Justice shall meet together'.

After this the Mother of God spoke to me and said: 'Come, daughter, and hear and See what the good Spirit does, and what the evil; for every man has infusions and visitations some time of the good Spirit and sometimes of the evil. For there is not one but that he is visited by God as long as he lives'.

And soon there appeared again the same dead king, whose soul the Holy Spirit inspired while he lived, in this wise: 'O friend, you ought to serve God with all your strength, for he gave life, conscience and understanding, health and power; and yet he suffers you in your sins'. The

king's conscience answered, speaking by a resemblance: 'It is true', he said, 'that I am required to serve God, by whose power I am made and bought, and through whose mercy I live and have my being'.

But here the wicked spirit stirred against the king and said: 'Brother, I give you good counsel. Do as he does who pares an apple, for the parings and the core he throws away, and the inside and the best he keeps to himself. So do you. God is meek and merciful and patient and needs nothing. Therefore give him of your goods such as you may easily part with, and other goods that are more profitable and desirable keep to yourself. Do also what you desire according to your flesh, for that may lightly be amended. And what you do not desire to do, though you are bound to do it, leave it; and instead with it give alms. For by this many may be helped'.

The king's conscience answered: 'This', he said, 'is a profitable counsel. For I may give some things that I have without any great harm to me, and yet God sets much store with that. And other things I shall keep to my own use and to obtain friendship with many others'.

After this the good angel who was given to guard the king spoke to him through inspiration, saying: 'O friend, think that you, a mortal, shall die. Think also that this life is short and that God is a rightful and patient Judge who examines all your thoughts, words and deeds from the beginning of your age of understanding unto the end, who also judges all your desires and intentions and leaves none undiscussed. Therefore, use your time and your strength reasonably and govern your members to the profit of your soul. Live soberly, not fulfilling the lust of your flesh in desires, for those who live according to the flesh and after their own will shall not come to the kingdom of God'.

But here again the fiend with his suggestions stirred the king and said: 'O brother, if you will give a reckoning to God of all your times and moments, when shall you then have pleasure? But hear my counsel. God is merciful and may easily be pleased, for he would not have redeemed you if he would have lost you. Therefore the Scripture of God says that all sins are forgiven by contrition. Do you therefore as did he who owed another

twenty pounds of gold. And when he lacked the amount of the payment, he went to his friend and asked his counsel.

And he advised him to take twenty pounds of copper and gild it with one pound of gold, and with that false money pay his creditor. And he did after the counsel given him and paid his creditor twenty pounds of copper gilded over; and nineteen pounds of pure gold he kept to himself. Do so likewise. Spend nineteen hours to your delight, lust and joy; and one hour is sufficient for you to be sorry and repent of your sins. Therefore do what delights you both before and after confession; for as copper that is gilded seems gold, so the works of sins that are meant by the copper, when they are gilded over with contrition, shall be removed, and all your works shall shine like gold'. Then the king's conscience answered: 'This counsel seems to me delightful and reasonable. For if I do this I shall have more time for my own delight'.

The good angel spoke again to the king through his inspiration, saying: 'O friend, think first with what skill God brought you out of the narrow womb of your mother. Second, think with what great patience God suffered you to live. Third, think with what great bitterness God has redeemed you from endless death'.

But again the fiend stirred the king, saying: 'O brother, if God has brought you out of the narrow womb of your mother into the breadth of the world, think also how he shall lead you again out of the world through bitter death. And if God lets you live long, think also that you have had in your life many diseases and sorrows against your will. If God has bought you with his harsh death, who compelled him? Did you pray to him?'

Then the king answered as if through speaking within his conscience: 'It is true', he said, 'what you say. For I grieve more that I shall die than that I was born from my mother's womb, It is also more grievous to me to bear the adversities of the world and the things that are contrary to my will than any other thing. For I would, if I could choose, rather live in the world without tribulation and to stay in comfort there, than to depart from the world. And I would rather desire to have endless life in the world with worldly happiness than that Christ had bought me with his blood. And I

care not if I never get to Heaven, if I might have the world at my will on earth'.

Then I heard a Word from the pulpit, saying this: 'Now take away from the king the vessel of ointment, because he has sinned against God the Father. For God the Father who is endless in the Son and in the Holy Spirit gave a true and right law by Moses. But this king has made an evil and a contrary law. Nevertheless, because this king has done some good deeds, although he did not do them with good intent, therefore he shall be allowed to have possession of the kingdom while he lives, and so be rewarded in this world'.

A second time the Word spoke out of the pulpit and said this: 'Take away the most sharp blade from this king's eyes. For he has sinned against the Son. For he said in his new law that judgement shall be done without mercy to them who do no mercy. But this king would not do mercy to him who was unrighteously vexed nor amend his error nor change his evil will. Nevertheless, for some good deeds that he has done, be it given to him as a reward that he have words of wisdom in his mouth and that he be held to be wise by many people'.

The third time the Word of Justice spoke from the pulpit and said: 'Let the hammer be taken away from the king, because he has sinned against the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit forgives sins to all those who repent, but this king intends to persevere in his sin to the end.

Nevertheless, because he has done some good deeds, therefore let that thing be given to him that he desires most to the delight of his body, that is, that woman whom he desires to be his wife, the delight of his eye, and that he have a fair and desirable end after that world'.

After this, when the end of his life drew near, the fiend cried and said: 'See, the vessel of ointment is borne away. Therefore shall I now make his hands heave, that he shall do no fruitful goods'. And as soon as the word of the fiend was said, the king was deprived of his strength and health. And then soon the fiend cried and said: 'See, the sharp blade is taken away; therefore I shall increase my snare upon him'.

And then the king was deprived of his speech. And in the moment of his privation, Justice spoke to the good angel who was given to the king to be his keeper, and said: 'Seek in the wheel and see what line of it goes up, and read the writing on it'.

The angel looked and the fourth line went up, in which that nothing was written, for all of it had been erased. Then said Justice: 'Because this soul has loved what is void, therefore he now goes to the delight of his reward'. And soon the soul of the king was separated from the body. And as soon as the soul was gone out, the fiend cried and said: 'Now I shall break and tear apart the heart of this king, because I possess his soul'.

And then I see how the king was all changed from the top of his head to the soul of the foot, and he seemed as horrible as a flayed beast. His eyes were removed and his flesh all clumped together. Then his voice was heard, saying: 'Woe to me, for I am made as blind as a whelp that is born blind, seeking the hind parts of the mother. For, through my unkindness, I cannot see the mother's teats. Woe to me, for I see in my blindness that I shall never see God, for my conscience understands now from where I fell, and what I ought to have done and did not do. Woe to me, for by the providence of God I was born into the world and born again by baptism. And yet I was negligent and forgot God.

And because I would not drink the milk of the sweetness of God, therefore am I now more like a blind dog than to a living and a seeing child. But now against my will, though I were a king, I am compelled to say the truth. For I was bound as if it had been with three ropes to serve God: that is to say, through baptism; through wedlock; and through the crown of the kingdom. But the first I despised when I turned my affection and will to the vanity of the world. Of the second I took no heed when I desired another man's wife. The third I despised when I was proud of earthly power and thought not of the power of heaven. Therefore, though I am now blind, I see in my conscience that for the contempt of my baptism I ought to be bound to the hatefulness of the fiend. And for the inordinate

stirring of the flesh I ought to suffer the fiend's lust. And for my pride I ought to be bound to the fiend's feet'.

Then the fiend answered: 'O brother, now it is time that I speak and with my speaking I shall work. Therefore come to me, not with charity but with hate; for I was the fairest of the angels, and you were a mortal man. And God most mighty gave me free choice of will. But because I used it inordinately and would rather hate God and surpass him in praise than love him, therefore I fell as he who has his head downward and his feet upward. But you, as each other man, were made after my fall and given a special privilege above me, in as much as you were bought with the blood of the Son of God. Therefore, because you have despised the charity of God, turn your head to my feet and I shall take your feet into my mouth; and so we can be joined together as they are where the one has a sword in the other's heart, and the other has a knife in his innards.

And because I had a head, that is to say, understanding, to worship God if I would, and you had feet, that is to say, strength to go to God and would not, therefore my fiery head shall consume your cold feet, and you shall be devoured without ceasing, but not consumed, for you shall be revived again to the same punishment. We shall also be joined together with three ropes, of which the first shall be in the middle, with which your navel and mine shall be bound together; so that when I breathe, you shall draw my venom into yourself, and when you breathe, I shall draw your entrails into myself. And worthily, for you love yourself more than your redeemer, as I loved myself more than my maker. Your head shall be bound to my feet with the second rope, and with the third rope my head shall be bound to your feet'.

After this, I see the same fiend having three sharp claws in each foot, saying to the king: 'Because you, brother, had eyes to see the way of life and conscience to discern between good and evil, therefore my two claws shall enter and claw your eyes; and the third claw shall enter your brain, with which you shall be so strangled that you shall be all under my feet. For you were made to have been my lord, and I the sole of your foot. You also had ears to hear the way of life, and a mouth to speak to the profit of

your soul. But because you despised to hear and speak to the health of your soul, therefore two claws of my other foot shall enter into your ears, and the third into your mouth, where you shall be so tormented that all things shall be to you the most bitter that seemed to you before most sweet, when you offend God'.

When these things were said, soon the head and the feet and the navel of the king were joined in this manner with the head and feet and navel of the fiend, and so both bound together fell down into Hell. And then I heard a voice crying, saying: 'O, O what has the king got now of all his wealth? Certainly nothing but harm. And what has he now of all his power? Certainly, nothing but shame. And what has he now of his avarice, through which he desired so much from his kingdom? Truly, nothing but pain. Because he was anointed with holy and sacred oil and consecrated with holy words and crowned with a king's crown, that he should worship the words and deeds of God, and defend and govern the people of God, knowing himself under the feet of God, and God his rewarder. But he despised being under the feet of God; therefore he is now under the feet of the fiend. And because he would not redeem his time with fruitful works when he could, therefore from henceforth he shall have no fruitful time'.

After this spoke Justice out of the Book that was in the pulpit, saying to me: 'All the things that are thus seriously shown are done against God in a moment. But because you are bodily, therefore it is necessary that spiritual things be shown to you through a bodily likeness. Because the king and the angel and the fiend seemed to speak together is nothing else but the inspirations of the good and evil spirits made by them to the soul of the king, or by his counselors or friends. That the fiend cried and said: 'It is truth', it is to mean that when the king said that he would hold and keep all that belonged to the crown, however it was obtained, and not to heed justice, then the king's conscience was bored through with the iron of the fiend, that is to say, with the hardness of sin, when he would not speak and discuss which were the things that belonged rightfully to the realm, and which not, and when he cared not to examine what right he had to the crown.

And then was the hook put to the king's soul, when the fiend's temptation prevailed so much in his soul that he would abide in his injustice until death. But because there came a hammer to the king's bosom after the hook, means the time of contrition given to the king; because if the king had had such a thought, saying, 'I have sinned; I will no longer knowingly own ill-gotten goods, but I will amend me from henceforth', then the hook of righteousness would be broken with the hammer of contrition, and the king would have come to the good life and the good way. That the fiend cried, 'See, the king gives me his tongue', and then the snare was put on it, which was when the king would not do grace to the man whom he had defrauded.

This is to understand, that whoever wittingly blames and defames his neighbour to increase his own fame, is governed with the spirit of the fiend, and snared with the snare of a thief. But because there came a sharp iron before the king after the snare means the time of changing and of correction of his will and work. Because when a man corrects his trespass with amendment and with good will, such a will is a most sharp blade, with which the snare of the fiend is cut asunder and remission of sins is obtained. Therefore if this king had changed his will and done grace to the man who had been wronged and slandered, then the snare of the fiend would have been cut away. But because he formed his will for an evil purpose, therefore the justice of God was that he should be more hardened in sin.

And that when the king thought to put new exactions of taxes upon his realm, you saw the venom poured upon his hands, meaning that his works were governed by the spirit of the fiend and by evil suggestions. For as venom makes the body cold and sick, so was the king troubled and restless with wicked suggestions and thoughts, seeking means how he might obtain goods and possession of other men and gold from them who went by the way. For then wayfaring men slept and trusted that their gold would be in their purse, but when they awoke, they found that it was in the king's power.

But because the vessel of ointment came after the venom means the blood of Jesus Christ, by which the sick soul is raised to life. For if the king had weighed his works in consideration of the blood of Christ and prayed God to be his help and said: 'I Lord God, who has made and bought me; I know that by your permission I can come to the kingdom and crown, therefore beware the enemies who war against me, and pay you my debts; for the goods of the realm are not sufficient'. I truly should have made his works and his burden easier to bear. But because he desired other men's goods and would be seen as just when he knew very well that he was wrong, therefore the fiend governed his heart and stirred him against the ordinance of the Church, and to wage war and defraud innocents, until Justice out of the pulpit of God's majesty cried for judgement and justice.

The wheel which was moved at the king's breathing means his conscience, which was stirred in the manner of a wheel, now to mirth, now to sadness. The four lines that were in the wheel mean the fourfold will that each man ought to have; that is to say, a perfect will, a strong will, a right will and a reasonable will. The perfect will is to love God and have him above all things; and this will ought to be in the first line above. The second line is to desire and to do good to his neighbour and to himself for God. This will must be so strong that it be neither broken with hate nor with greed. The third will is to abstain from fleshly desires and to desire eternal things. And this will must be right that it not be done to the pleasure of man, but of God. The fourth will is not to will to have the world, but reasonably and only to your need.

Therefore when the wheel was turned, there appeared in the last line going upward that the king loved the delights of the world, and set at nought the love of God. In the second line was written that he loved the men of the world. In the third line was written the love that he had inordinately for worldly riches and possessions. In the fourth line was written nothing, but all was void in which ought to have been written the love of God. Above all things, therefore, the blankness of the fourth line means the absence of love and fear of God; for by fear God is drawn into the soul, and by love God is fastened in a good soul.

Because if a man had never loved God in all his lifetime, and at his last end might say or think in his heart, 'O God, I think with all my heart that I have sinned against you; give me your love and I shall repent me from this time', a man of such love may not nor shall go to Hell. But because the king loved him not whom he ought to have loved, therefore he has now the reward of his love'.

After this, I see the other king on the right side of Justice, who was in Purgatory, who was like a newborn child that might not move himself about, but only open his eyes. And I see that the fiend stood on the king's left side, whose head was like a pair of bellows with a long pipe, his arms were like two serpents, and his knees like a press, and his feet like a long hook. On the right side of the king stood a most fair angel, ready to help him.

And then I heard a voice saying: 'This king appears now such as his soul was disposed when it departed from the body'. And then the fiend cried to the Book in the pulpit, saying: 'Here is seen a marvelous thing. This angel and I have waited for the birth of this child, he with his cleanliness, and I with my filth. But now the child is born, not in the body, but from the body, uncleanness in him appears which the angel, loathing, might not touch the child. But I torment him, for he is fallen into my hands. But I do not know where to lead him; for my dark eyes do not see him, for the light of a clearness that comes out of his breast. The angel sees him and knows where to lead him, but he may not touch him. Therefore you, who are the rightful Judge, separate us from our strife'.

The Word answered out of the Book which was in the pulpit and said: 'Tell, you who speak, from what cause this soul comes into your hands'. The fiend answered: 'You are righteous, and you said that no one shall enter Heaven who does not first make restitution of things which are unrightfully obtained. But this soul is all befouled with ill-gotten goods. Second, you said that treasures should not be hoarded which rust and moths destroy, but those which last without end. But in this soul that place was empty where heavenly treasure should have been gathered and that place was full where worms and frogs were nourished. Third, you say that

a man's neighbour should be loved like God. But this soul loved his body more than God, and of the love of his neighbour he cared not at all; for he, while in the body, rejoiced when his neighbour's goods were taken away. He wounded the hearts of his subjects, not taking heed of the harm to others, as long as he himself had plenty, and he did whatever he desired, and commanded whatever he would, and took little heed of justice. These are the principal causes, after which follow others without number'.

Then answered the Word out of the Book of Justice, saying to the angel: 'O you angel, keeper of the soul, who are in light and see light, what right or power have you to help this soul?'

The angel answered: 'This soul', he said, 'had holy faith, and believed and hoped that all of which he had sinned should be done away by contrition and confession. And he feared you, his God, though less than he ought to have'.

Then Justice spoke again and said: 'O you, my angel, now it is granted to you to touch the soul and to you, you fiend, to see the light of the soul. Inquire therefore both what this soul loved when it lived in the body and had all his members intact'. The angel and the fiend both answered: 'He loved men and wealth'.

Then said Justice again out of the Book: 'What did he love when he was in agony with the pain of death?' Then both answered: 'He loved himself, for he was more agonized with the sickness of his body and of the tribulation of his heart, than he was of the Passion of his Redeemer'. Then spoke Justice again and said: 'Still seek and look for what he loved and thought in the last moment of his life, while he still had a whole conscience and understanding'.

Only the good angel answered: 'The soul thought thus. 'Woe', he said, 'to me, for I have been overbold against my Redeemer. Would God I now had time in which I might thank God for his benefits. Because it grieves me more that I have sinned against God than the pain of my body; and though I should never attain heaven, yet would I serve my God'.

Justice answered out of the Book: 'For as much as you, fiend, may not see the soul for the brightness of his light, and you, my angel, may not touch the soul for his uncleanness, therefore this is the judgement; that you, fiend, purge it; and you, angel, comfort it until it be brought into the brightness of bliss. And to you, you soul, it is granted to look to the good angel and to have comfort from him; and you shall obtain the blood of Christ and the prayers of his Mother and of his Church'.

'Then said the fiend to the soul: 'Because you have come to my hands filled with food and ill-gotten goods, I shall now therefore empty you with my press'.

And then the fiend put the brains of the king between his knees, like a press, and strained it strongly in length and breadth, till all the marrow was as thin as the leaf of a tree. Second, the fiend said to the soul: 'Because the place is empty where virtues should be, I shall therefore fill it'. And then he put the pipe of his bellows in the king's mouth, and blew strongly, and filled him very full of horrible wind; so much so that all the king's being and sinews were wretchedly broken and burst asunder.

The third time, the fiend said again to the king's soul: 'Because you were cruel and without mercy towards your subjects, who ought to have been to you as if your sons, my arms therefore shall bitingly grip you together; that as much as you grieved your subjects, so shall my arms, as if serpents, rend you with the most grievous horror and sorrow'.

After these three pains, that is to say, of the press, of the bellows, and of the serpents, when the fiend would have accumulated these same pains again, beginning at the first, then I saw the angel of God put out his hands upon the fiend's hands, that he should not make the pains so great as they were the first time. And so each time, the angel of God eased the pains; and after each pain, the soul lifted up his eyes to the angel, saying nothing but showing in his bearing that he was comforted by him; and that he should quickly be saved.

Then said the Word out of the pulpit to me: 'All these things which are thus seriously shown to you are done with God in a moment; but because you are bodily, they are shown to you in bodily likeness. But this king, though he were greedy to have the world's praise and to obtain goods that were not his, yet, because he fears God and left for that dread some things that were pleasurable to him, therefore that dread drew him to the love and charity of God. For you know well that many who are involved with many heavy sins become very contrite before their death, whose contrition may be so perfect that not only their sin is forgiven them, but also the pain of Purgatory, if they die in the same contrition.

But the king obtained no charity until the last moment of his life; for then his strength and his conscience were failing, yet he obtained of my grace godly inspiration, by which he sorrowed more of not worshipping God than of his own sorrow and harm. And this sorrow means that light by which the fiend was blinded and knew not where to lead the soul. Yet he said not that he was so blinded for lack of spiritual understanding, but because he marveled how that in that soul should be such clearness of light and so much uncleanness. The angel knew well enough whether to lead the soul, but he could not touch it until it was purged. As it is written, 'No man shall see the face of God but he be first made clean.'

Then the Word out of the pulpit spoke again to me and said: 'That you see the angel put out his hands upon the soul and of the fiend that he should not increase the pains means the power of the angel above the power of the fiend by which he restrains the fiend's malice. For the fiend should have no measure nor order in punishing unless he were restrained by the virtue of God. And therefore God does mercy in Hell; for though there be no redemption, remission nor comfort to them who are damned, yet inasmuch as they are not punished but after their deserts and after justice, therefore in that is shown God's great mercy. Otherwise the fiend should have no temperance nor measure in his malice. That the king was seen as a child just born means that those who will be born out of the vanity of the world to the life of heaven, must be innocent and by the grace of God grow in virtues to perfection.

That the king lifted up his eyes to the angel means that by the angel, his guardian, he had his comfort; and of hope he had joy, inasmuch as he hoped to come to endless life. And these are spiritual things understood by bodily likeness; for neither fiends nor angels have such members nor such speaking together, for they are spirits. But by such likeness their goodness or wickedness are shown to bodily eyes'.

Also the Word spoke out of the pulpit, saying to me: 'The pulpit which you see means the Godhead's self; that is to say, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. That you might not understand the length, breadth, depth, and height of the pulpit means that in God is not found either beginning or end. For God is and was without beginning, and shall be without end. And that each color of the three said colors was seen in the others, and yet each color was discerned from the others, means that God the Father is endless in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and the Son in the Father and in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit in them both, which are truly one in nature and distinct in property of persons.

That one of the colors seemed to be sanguine and red means the Son, who without hurt of his Godhead took man's nature into her person. The white color means the Holy Spirit, by whom is washing away of sins. The golden color means the Father, who is the beginning and the perfection of all things. Not that any perfection is more in the Father than in the Son, nor that the Father is before the Son; but that you understand that the Father is not the same in person, that is the Son. For the Father is other in person, and other is the Son in person, and other is the Holy Spirit in person; but one in nature. Therefore three colors are shown to you both separated and joined together; separated for distinction of persons, and joined together for union of nature.

And as in each color you see the other colors, and you might not see one without another, and there was nothing in the colors before nor after, more nor less, right so in the Trinity is nothing before nor after, more nor less, separated nor joined; but one will, one eternity, one power and one glory. And though the Son is of the Father, and the Holy Spirit of both, yet

the Father was never without the Son and the Holy Spirit, nor the Son and the Holy Spirit without the Father'.

Also the Word spoke to me and said: 'The Book that you see in the pulpit means that in the Godhead is endless justice and wisdom, to which nothing may be added or lessened. And this is the Book of Life, that is not written as the scripture, that is and was not; but the scripture of this Book is forever. For in the Godhead is endless being and understanding of all things present, past and to come, without any variation or changing. And nothing is invisible to it, for it sees all things.

That the Word spoke itself means that God is the endless Word, from whom are all words, and in whom things have life and being. And this same Word spoke then visibly when the Word was made man and was conversant among men. So, this goodly vision has the Mother of God made to be shown to you; and this is the mercy called to the kingdom of Sweden, that men dwelling there should hear the words that proceed out of the mouth of God. But because few receive and believe these heavenly words given you from God, that is not God's fault, but men's. For they will not leave the cold of their own souls. Nevertheless, the words of the Gospel were not fulfilled with the first kings of our time; but the times shall yet come when they shall be fulfilled' ”.

How the Father of Heaven showed to Saint Bridget a severe judgement upon a king who was unkind and disobedient to the counsels of God. And how they who are in Heaven, on earth, in Purgatory, and in Hell ask wrath upon kings and princes and how our Lady prayed for them.

Chapter 56

God the Father spoke to the spouse, Saint Bridget, and said: ”Listen to the things that I say, and speak of the things that I order you; not for your power, nor for your reproach. But singly and evenly hold in your heart the praiser and the reprover, so that you may never be moved to ire for reproof, nor raised to pride for praising. For he is worthy of praise who is

and was endless in himself, who has made angels and men only to that end, that many should be partners in his glory. I am now he, and the same in power and in will that I was when the Son took man's nature; in which Son I am and was, and he in me, and the Holy Spirit in both.

And though it were secret to the world that he was the Son of God, yet it was known to some, though it were few. And know that the Justice of God which had no beginning nor end, no more than God himself, was first shown to angels as light before they see God; for they fell not from ignorance of the law of the Justice of God, but because they would not hold it or keep it. For they understand that all who love God should see him and abide with him for ever, and they who hated God should be punished endlessly and never see him in his glory.

And yet in their ambition and desire for praise they chose rather to hate God and to have the place where they shall be punished, than to love him that they might rejoice endlessly. And of like justice is that of a man as of angels. For man ought first to love God and afterward see him, that he should more be seen in manhood; for he might not be seen in his Godhead. And free choice is given also to man as to angels, that they should desire heavenly things and despise earthly.

Therefore I, God, visit many in many ways, although my Godhead is not seen. And in many parts of the world I have shown to many persons how the sin of each land might have been amended, and how mercy might have been obtained, before ever I did justice and my righteousness in those places. But men take no heed of these things, nor consider them. This justice is also in God, that all who are upon earth first hope surely for those things that they do not see, and which they believe in relation to the Church of God and to the holy Gospel. And furthermore that they love God above all things, who has given them all things; and he has given himself to death for them, that all should endlessly rejoice with him. Therefore I, myself, God, speak to such as desire me, that it be known how sin ought to be amended, and how pain may be lessened and bliss increased”.

"After this I see", said Saint Bridget, "as if all the heavens had been one house, in which sat a Judge on a throne. And the house was full of servants and praisers of the Judge, each of them in his voice. And under this Heaven was seen a kingdom. And soon there was heard a voice that all might hear it, which said: 'Come, both angels and fiends, to the Judgement; that is to say, you angel who are guardian of the king, and you fiend who are governor of the king'.

And as soon as the word was spoken, an angel and a fiend stood before the Judge. The angel seemed like a man troubled, and the fiend like a joyous man.

Then said the Judge: 'O you angel, I put you as the king's guardian, when he made the covenant of peace with me and made confession of all his sins that he had done from his childhood, that you should be nearer to him than the fiend. How is he now therefore so far from you?'

The angel answered, 'O Judge, I am burning in the fire of your charity, with which the king was warmed for a time. But when the king loathed and despised those things that your friends said to him, and it was tedious to him to do the things that you counseled to him, then the king went according as his own lust drew him, away from me, and nearer each hour to the enemy'.

The fiend answered, 'I am the self which is cold, and you are the self which is hot with godly fire. Therefore such as who comes closer to you is more fervent to good works, so likewise the king, drawing near to me, is made more cold towards your charity and hot towards my works'.

Then answered the Judge: 'The king was stirred to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himself. Why, therefore, have you taken from me the man whom I bought with my own blood, and made him to deny to his neighbour, not only his temporal goods but even his life?'

The fiend answered: 'O Judge, now it is for me to speak and the angel to keep silence. For when the king went from you and from your counsels

and came to me, then I counseled him to love himself more than his neighbour; and that he should not care for the health of souls, if he had the power of the world; and that he should not take heed of those who were needy or defrauded, if his friends had plenty'.

Then said the Judge to the fiend: 'Who so will go from you, they may; for you may hold none with violence. Therefore I shall yet send some of my friends to the king, who will warn him of his peril'.

The fiend answered: 'Justice is that who ever will obey me, he ought to be governed by me; and therefore I shall send my counselors also to the king, and it shall be seen to whose counsel he would rather give audience'.

Then said the Judge: 'Go, for my justice is to judge to the tormenter what is his, as well as to him who has action of what is due to him in his cause'.

After this, said Saint Bridget, when certain years were past, I see again the same Judge with his heavenly host, more moved than he was wont to be, and as though he were angry. And then he said to the angel and to the fiend: 'Tell', he said, 'which of you has overcome'.

The angel answered: 'When I came to the king with godly inspiration, and your friends with spiritual words, soon the messengers of the fiend whispered in his ears and said: 'Will you spare temporal goods or your praise or souls or bodies, that your friends whom you love more than yourself may have praise and prosperity?' To this stirring the king assented and to the stirring of the friends he, saying, answered: 'I am sufficient enough and wise enough from counsel without you. Go your way from me with shame'. And so the king turned his back to them, and his face to the enemy, and put from him friends with dishonest reproof and the scorn of the friends of the world.'

Then cried the fiend and said: 'Judge, see, now it is for me to govern the king and to give him counsel by my friends'. The Judge answered: 'Go,

and as much as you are allowed, punish the king. Because he has provoked me to indignation against him'.

Two years after this, the Judge appeared again, and the angel and the fiend before him. Then said the fiend: 'O Judge, decide now whether I shall pronounce judgement. You are truly the essence of charity, and therefore it is not fitting to you to be in the heart of him where envy and anger are rooted. You are also true wisdom and therefore you ought not to be in the heart of him who desires to deny the life of his neighbours, their goods, and their praise. You are also the true truth, and therefore it is not proper to dwell with that man who has bound himself with oaths to do treason and deceit. Therefore because this king has spit you out from him as that thing is spit out that is abominable, therefore allow me to stir him and oppress him, that he be all out of his mind and actions. For my counsels he holds as wisdom, and your counsel he takes for scorn. And with such reward I desire to reward him, for he has done my will. Nevertheless I may not harm him without your permission'.

And when this was heard, the Judge seemed to have a marvelous changing; for then he appeared as bright as the sun, and in the sun were seen three words: that is, Virtue, Truth and Justice. Virtue spoke and said: 'I have made all things without merit beforehand. And therefore I am worthy to be praised by my creature and not to be despised. I am also worthy of being praised by my friends for my charity. I ought also to be praised and feared by my enemies, for I support them patiently without their merits, where they have worthily deserved damnation. And therefore, you fiend, it is fitting to me to decide all after my justice and not after your malice'.

Then soon Truth spoke also and said: 'I in my Godhead took manhood of a Virgin, in which manhood I spoke and preached to people. I sent also the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and I spoke by their tongues. As I spoke each day by spiritual infusion to such as I chose, therefore my friends must know that I myself who am Truth have sent my words to a king, which he has despised. Therefore, you fiend, hear now; for I will speak that it be known whether the king has obeyed my counsel or my stirrings. For I will

tell all the counsel I gave to the king, rehearsing now in a few words what I expressed earlier at greater length.

For the king was stirred and counseled to beware of all sins forbidden by holy Church and to have moderate fastings, so that he might hear and answer his subjects' complaints, and be ready to do right to rich and poor who asked it; so that for much abstinence the good of the community of the people of the realm and the governance of the common profit not be lessened, nor that he should not be the more slothful from overmuch excess to give audience to all. Also the king was counseled and stirred how he should serve God and pray, and which days and times he should leave other occupations and purposes for the common profit of his realm. Also the king was counseled which days he should treat all his counsels with men who loved Truth and with the friends of God; and that he should never knowingly pass over truth nor law; and that he should not put any unwanted grievance to the common people of his realm but for the defence of the same, and for war against the pagans.

Also the king was counseled to have a number of servants in his household, according to the faculty of livelihood and rents of the exchequer of his realm. And all that was left over, he should share with his knights and friends. Also the king was counseled wisely to admonish them who were insolent and lewd with charitable words, and manfully to correct them; and that he love in goodly charity those who were prudent and sober; and that he should defend the people dwelling in his realm and give his gifts with discretion; and all those things that belong to the crown he should not diminish nor alienate; and he should judge rightfully both men of the land and strangers; that he should love the clergy, and charitably gather to him his chivalry, and nourish in peace the common people of his realm'.

When these things were heard, the fiend answered to the Judge and said: 'And I counseled the king to do some sins privately which he dared not do in the open. I counseled him also to say long and many prayers and psalms without attention and devotion of heart, so that he should prolong and occupy the time in vain, and not hear any who would complain, nor do

any right to such as had suffered wrong. Also I stirred the king to leave and despise other good men of the realm; and to lift up and prefer one man above all others; and to love him with all his heart, more than himself; and to hate his own son; and to grieve the common people of the realm with his exactions; and to slay men and spoil churches.

I stirred the king also to simulate justice; and to permit each man to deny others, that he should alienate and give lands belonging to his crown to a great prince of another realm, my sworn brother; and this I counseled to that end that treason and war should come about; that good men and rightful should be cast down; wicked people should be drowned the deeper in Hell; and they who shall be purged in Purgatory should be the more grievously tormented; women should be defiled; ships in the sea should be robbed; sacraments of the Church should be despised; lecherous lives should the more boldly be continued; and all my will more freely fulfilled. And thus, Judge, by these sins, and many others, which I do and which are fulfilled by the king, it may be proved and known whether the king has obeyed your counsel or mine'.

At this spoke Justice, answering, and said: 'Because the king has hated Virtue and despised Truth, therefore it is now proper for you to increase some of your counsel given to the king. And I ought according to justice to lessen and withdraw from him some of my graces I gave to him'.

The fiend answered: 'O Judge, I shall multiply and increase my gifts to the king. And first, I shall send him negligence, that he take no heed of the works of God in his heart, and that he think not on the works and examples of your friends'.

Justice answered: 'And I shall diminish for him the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and I shall withdraw from him the good thoughts and comfort that he had before'.

Then said the fiend: 'I shall send him boldness to think and to do deadly sins and venial without embarrassment or shame'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his reason and discretion that he discern not nor discuss the rewards and judgements of deadly and venial sins'. The fiend said: 'I shall give him dread that he dare not speak nor do right against the enemies of God'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his prudence and knowledge of things to be done so lewdly, that he shall seem more like a fool and clown in words and deeds than a wise man'. Then said the fiend: 'I shall bring him anguish and tribulations of heart, because he has not prosperity after his will'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen for him ghostly comforts, which he had sometimes in prayers and in his actions'.

The fiend said: 'I shall put to him evil to think subtle inventions, by which he may beguile and deceive those whom he wishes to destroy'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his understanding so much that he shall take no heed of his own praise nor of his own profit'. The fiend said: 'I shall put to him such joy of heart that he shall not heed his own shame, nor of the harm and peril of his soul, while he may have temporal prosperity after his will'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his thinking beforehand and that consideration that wise men have in their words and deeds'.

Then said the fiend: 'I shall give him a woman's boldness, and an unseemly fear, and such a bearing that he shall seem more like a ribald or a harlot than a crowned king'.

Justice answered: 'Of such a judgement is he worthy, that separates him from God. For he ought to be despised by his friends, and to be hated by the community of his people, and to be cast down of God's enemies; for he has misused the gifts of God's charity, both spiritual and physical'.

Then spoke Truth again and said: 'These things that are shown to you are not for the merits of the king, whose soul is not yet judged; but it shall be judged in the last moment of his life'.

After these things were said, I saw that the three, that is to say, Virtue, Truth and Justice, were like the Judge who spoke before.

And then I heard the voice, as if of a beadle saying, 'O you, all heavens with all planets, be silent; and all you fiends who are in darkness, listen; and all you others that are in darkness, hear; for the sovereign emperor proposes to hear judgement upon the princes of the earth'.

And then the kings whom I saw were not bodily but spiritual. And my ghostly ears and eyes were opened to hear and to see. And then I saw Abraham come with all the saints who were born of his generation. Then came all Patriarchs and Prophets. And afterwards I saw the four Evangelists, whose shape was like to four beasts, as they are painted upon walls in the world, except that they appeared to be living and not dead. After this, I saw twelve seats, and in them the twelve Apostles, waiting for the coming of the power. Then came Adam and Eve with Martyrs and Confessors and all other saints that came from them. But the manhood of Christ was not yet seen, nor the body of his blessed Mother; but all waited for her arrival. The earth and the water seemed to be lifted up to Heaven, and all things that were in them humbled themselves, and with reverence bowed themselves to the power.

Then after this, I saw an altar that was in the seat of the majesty, and a chalice with wine and water and bread in the likeness of a host offered up upon the altar; and then I saw how in a church of the world a priest began mass, arrayed in a priest's vestments. And when he had done all that belonged to the Mass, and came to the words with which he should bless the host, I saw as if the sun and the moon and the stars with all the other planets, and all the heavens with their courses and moving spheres, sounded with the sweetest note and with sundry voices. And all the song and melody was heard, and seemed as if it had been innumerable manners of music, whose most sweet sound was impossible to comprehend by man's wit or to be spoken about. They who were in the light beheld the priest and bowed themselves to the power with reverence and worship, and they who were in darkness shuddered and were afraid.

But when the words of God were said by the priest upon the host, it seemed to me that the same sacred host was in the seat of the majesty in three figures, staying nevertheless in the hand of the priest. And the same holy host was made a living Lamb, and in the Lamb appeared the face of a man. And a burning flame was seen within and without the Lamb and the face. And when I fastened my eyes intently to behold the face, I saw the same face in the Lamb. And the Virgin sat crowned by the Lamb, and all angels served them, who were of so great a multitude as the beams of the sun. And a marvelous shining proceeded from the Lamb.

There was also so great a multitude of holy souls, that my sight could not behold them in length, breadth, height and deepness. I see also some places being empty, that are yet to be fulfilled to the worship of God. Then I heard a voice out of the earth, of innumerable thousands, crying and saying: 'O Lord God, rightful Judge, give your judgement upon our kings and princes, and take heed to the shedding of our blood, and behold the sorrows and weeping of our wife and children. Behold our hunger and shame, our wounds and our imprisonments, the burning of our houses, and the violation of the chaste maidens and women. Behold the wrong done to churches and all the clergy. And see the false promises and deceits of kings and of princes, and the pillage that they wreak to them with violence and anger. For they heed not how many thousands die, so that they may spread abroad their pride'.

Then cried there out of Hell as it had been innumerable thousands, saying: 'O Judge, we know that you are maker of all things. Give judgement therefore upon the lords whom we served on earth. For they have drowned us in Hell deeper than we should have been, and though we will you harm, yet justice compels us to complain and say the truth. For our earthly lords loved us without charity; for they cared no more about our souls than about those of dogs. And it was alone to them whether we loved you, our Creator, or no, desiring ever to be beloved and served by us. Therefore they are unworthy of Heaven; for they care not for you. And they are worthy of Hell, unless your grace help them. For they have deserved us; and therefore we would suffer more grievous pains than suffer that their pain should never have end'.

Afterward, they who were in Purgatory, speaking by likenesses, cried and said: 'O Judge, we are condemned to Purgatory for contrition and good will that we had at the end of our life. And therefore we complain upon the lords who yet live on the earth. For they ought to have governed us, and to have warned us with words and criticism, and to have taught us with wholesome counsels and examples. But they comforted us rather, and provoked us rather to evil deeds and sins. And therefore our pain is now the more grievous for them; and the time of pain is the larger; and our shame and tribulation is greater'.

Then spoke Abraham with all the Patriarchs, and said: 'O Lord, among all things desirable, we desire that your Son should be born of our lineage, which is now despised by the princes of the earth. Therefore we ask judgement upon them, for they take no heed of your mercy, nor do they dread your judgement'.

Then spoke the Prophets and said: 'We prophesied the coming of the Son of God; and we said that for the deliverance of the people it was necessary that he should be born of a Virgin and endure treason and be taken and be scourged and be crowned with thorns and at last die on the cross, that Heaven should be opened and sin taken away. Wherefore those things are now fulfilled of which we said; therefore we ask judgement upon the princes of the earth who despise your Son who of your charity died for them'.

Then spoke the Evangelists and said: 'We are witnesses that your Son has fulfilled in himself all things which were prophesied of him'.

Also the Apostles spoke and said: 'We are Judges, therefore it belongs to us to judge according to the truth. Wherefore he who despises the body of God and his precepts, we judge to perdition'.

After all this, the Virgin who sat by the Lamb said: 'O most sweet Lord, have mercy upon them'. To her the Judge answered: 'It is not right', he said, 'to deny you any thing. Therefore they who cease from sin and do

worthy penance shall find mercy; and judgement shall be turned away from them'.

After this I saw that the face that was seen in the Lamb spoke to the king and said: 'I have done grace with you, for I have shown you my will: how you should bear and demean yourself in your governing, and how you should govern yourself honestly and worthily. I cherished you also with sweet words of charity like a mother, and I frightened you with warnings like a piteous father. But you, obeying the fiend, have cast me from yourself, as a mother casts away a stillborn child whom she does not touch nor put her teats to his mouth. And therefore all the good that is promised you shall be taken from you and given to one who shall come after you'.

After this the Virgin who sat with the Lamb spoke to me and said: 'I will tell you how understanding of spiritual visions is given to you; for the saints of God receive the Holy Spirit in different ways. For some of them know before the time when those things should happen which were shown to them, such as holy Prophets. Others knew before what end any battle should have, before they who should fight entered battle. Others knew in spirit what they should answer to persons who came to them when any thing was asked of them.

Others knew whether they were dead or alive who were far from them. But it is not lawful to you to know other things, but to hear and see ghostly things, and to write the things which you see, and to tell and say them to such people as you are ordered. And it is not lawful to you to know whether they be alive or dead, to whom you are asked to write; or whether they will obey or not the counsels of your writing given to you from God in spiritual visions from him. But though this king has despised my words; yet shall there come another who shall receive them with reverence and praise and use them to his health.' ”

Book 9

We don't have all chapters in Book 9 yet.

Christ, in giving these revelations, likens himself to a carpenter; and afterward he sent them to Lord Alphonsus, a bishop and at that time a hermit, to be elucidated, telling how the Holy Spirit sometimes leaves the elect to themselves.

Chapter 49

The Son of God spoke to the bride, saying: "I am like a carpenter who, cutting wood from the forest, carries it off into his house and of it fashions a beautiful image and adorns it with colors and lineaments. And his friends, seeing the image and that it could be adorned with colors still more beautiful, themselves applied their colors too, painting upon it. Thus I, God, have cut from the forest of my Godhead my words that I have put into your heart. My friends, in fact, have redacted them into books, in accord with the grace given to them, and have colored and adorned them.

Now, therefore, that they may be serviceable to more tongues, give over all the books of the revelations of these same words of mine to my bishop, the hermit, who is to write them together and to elucidate the obscure things and to hold to the Catholic sense of my Spirit.

Because my Spirit sometimes leaves my elect to themselves in order that they, in the manner of a pair of scales, may judge and examine my words in their heart, and, after much thought, may expound them more clearly and elicit the better things.

For just as your heart is not always capable and warm for uttering and writing those things that you sense, but now you turn and turn them again in your soul, now you write and rewrite them, until you come to the proper sense of my words, thus with the Evangelists and Doctors my Spirit

ascended and descended because now they put some things that had to be emended, now some things that had to be retracted, now they were judged and reprehended by others.

And nevertheless others afterward came, who more subtly examined and more lucidly explained their words. But nevertheless it was from my Spirit, through infusion, that all my Evangelists had the words that they spoke and wrote. Likewise say to the same hermit that he is to do and to fill the office of an evangelist.”

Book 10

We don't have Book 10 yet.

Book 11 "The Sermon of the Angel"

Chapter 1

Sunday - First Reading

When John in his Gospel speaks of the Word, that is he who is, and has ever been, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, In this one God, there are truly Three Persons; yet not three Gods, for in the Three Persons is only one divinity, the one, perfect Godhead, belonging equally to each; and in the Three Persons, only one will, one wisdom, one power, one beauty, one strength, one love, one joy.

The Word, then, being for ever one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is truly God. A familiar word like ONE can help us, perhaps, to understand - for each of the three letters is necessary to the whole, and we cannot take away one letter without destroying the meaning. So in God, there must ever be the Three Persons, equal in all things, with all things equally in each, for there can be no dividing of God. There was no dividing when the Word, the Son of God, took a human nature; he was not separated, by this, from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He took our human nature, yet remained ever the Word of God. His human nature was necessary for him, to achieve our salvation. It can help us to understand this if we consider how our thoughts and our words are not things we can see or touch, except in so far as writing gives them a more material existence.

The Word of God, the Son of God, could not have come as one of us, or lived with us, for our salvation, unless he had taken on our human nature. A written word can be seen and read, then understood, then spoken. The Son of God can be seen, in that flesh he took to himself, and so we can understand and have no doubt that he is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Truly then, there are Three Persons, undivided, unchanging and unchangeable, eternally in all things equal, Three, yet but one God.

Since God is eternal and timeless, all things were eternally known to him, before their existence in time.

Then, when he willed them to be, they came to be with that exact perfection which suited their purpose. The divine wisdom of God willed all things to be what they are for his own honour and glory. He had no need of them; it was not to make up for any deficiency in himself - something wanting to his goodness or joy - there can be no defect or deficiency in God. It was his love, and his love alone, which led him to create; that there might be beings, apart from himself, whose existence should be an existence of joy, deriving from his own being an joy. All things, then, foreseen by God, and present to him eternally, though as yet uncreated, had already that design and perfection which they would possess when his creating brought them to be.

One thing excelled all others, designed and perfected by God with a special joy. This was Mary, the Virgin who was a Mother, the Mother who was ever a Virgin.

It has been said that all created things are made up of four elements - fire, air, water and earth. If so, then in Mary's pure body, these elements were to have a special perfection: the air should be fittingly an image of the Holy Spirit; the earth should be rich and fruitful, for the growth of useful things, to supply every need; the water should be calm and unmenacing, unruffled by every wind; and the fire so strong and bright that all the earth should be warmed by it, and the heavens themselves.

Virgin Mary, we know that in you the design and perfection willed by God have come to be. As he foresaw you, so he has perfectly created you. And of all his creation, you most please him. The Father rejoiced that he would do so much through you: the Son rejoiced in your holiness and love: the Holy Spirit rejoiced in your lowliness and obedience. The Father's joy is that of the Son and the Holy Spirit: the Son's joy is that of the Father and Spirit: and the Holy Spirit's joy is that of the Father and the Son.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit rejoice in you, the one joy of Three who are One. Father, Son and Holy Spirit love you, Mary, the love of the Three Persons, One God.

Chapter 2

Sunday - Second Reading

Mary, we know that you were ever in the mind of God, before his creating brought you to be - the most perfect of all his creatures. He knew you as Noe, before the flood, knew the Ark he was to build, and the way he was to build it. The design of the Ark had been made known to him, and he waited for the time when God would command him to set to work. The design and perfection, Mary, of your glorious body, the Ark of God, was known to God before all time. And he knew the time when he would bring it into being by his creating. As Noe rejoiced at the thought of the Ark he was to build, so God rejoiced, Mary, at the thought of you. Noe's Ark would withstand the storms; you, Mary, the Ark of God, would withstand, in the strength of your holiness, every attack of the hatred and sin of hell.

Noah's Ark was so built that no water could seep in - a ship whose timbers were carefully protected both inside and out. You, Mary, the Ark of God, would be so strong in God's grace, anointed and protected by his Holy Spirit, that no desire would ever enter your heart, either for your own glory or for the possession of earthly things. Such desires, we know, are as displeasing to God as the water which seeps into the keel of a ship, and collecting there becomes state and offensive.

Noe was pleased at the size and capacity of his Ark. God rejoiced, Mary, in that holiness which would be yours, in your love which would embrace all creatures, and in your gentleness which would look with pity on sinners, and hate only what was hateful to him. But most of all, he rejoiced in that ever increasing grace which would fit you to bear in your womb that which heaven and earth could not contain, the Person of God the Son, to hold him and be truly his Mother.

Noe took pride, as every captain of a ship takes pride, in the cleanliness and tidiness and brightness of the Ark. God rejoiced, Mary, in your virginity, for in you there would be no sin, nor slightest stain of sin, to taint your perfection. Noe provided for himself and those with him, all that was needed to survive the days ahead. God chose you, Mary, for his Son, that your body should provide for him a perfect human body. Noe came from the Ark unchanged. But from you, Mary, the Ark of God, the Son of God came forth, clothed with that pure flesh and blood which he had taken from you.

When Noe left the Ark, its purpose was served - it was empty and useless. But when Christ came forth from your womb, you were filled with every gift of the Holy Spirit, growing ever in holiness, not further now from Christ, but nearer to him, and dearer even than before, united to him on earth and in heaven for ever.

Chapter 3

Sunday - Third Reading

From the moment of God's promise, through the long years of waiting, Abraham loved the son who was to be his, the child who would be called Isaac. How much more did God love you, Virgin Mary, whom he had foreseen from eternity, and knew before your creating, for he knew also the joy your birth would be to him. Abraham did not know how his love for God would be tested and proved through his promised son.

But God knew with his divine knowledge how through you, Mary, his great love for man would be made known. Abraham knew that Isaac would be born of his union with Sarah, a child conceived unexpectedly in their old age. God knew that his Son would be conceived in you, Virgin Mary, without the intervention of man, and be born of you, true Mother yet ever a Virgin. Abraham knew that his son once conceived would grow without his help to become a person, independent of his father. God knew that the

sacred body of his Son, formed in your womb, would in a special way, be for ever most intimately united with the Godhead. This must be so, since the Son is ever in the Father, the Father in the Son, equal yet one.

Abraham knew that he and his son must return to dust in the corruption of death. God would not allow your pure body, Mary, to see corruption, for it was the flesh and blood of your body which had been given to form the body of his Son. Abraham built a house for the son who was to be born to him. But God himself, the Blessed Trinity, is the dwelling in which you, Mary, will abide for ever. In a wonderful way, then, your dwelling, Mary, was in God, who surrounded you with his protecting love. Yet God dwelt ever in you, leading you to the highest holiness by his presence. For his promised son, Abraham prepared wheat, wine and oil, three kinds of essential nourishment.

For you, Virgin Mary, God himself was to be your eternal meal, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Three yet One. And through you he was to give himself to men as the food of life. So we may attribute this food of life in a way, to you, Mary, since it is by you that it has come to us. The three things which Abraham prepared can be thought of as a sign of the action of the Three Persons. Oil cannot burn without a wick. This can suggest to us That the love of God the Father could not be made known on earth without the humanity of the Son, that humanity which he took from you, his Virgin Mother.

Wheat was to be made into flour, and then bread, for our daily use. The Son of God, though he is truly the food of Angels, could not be our food without that flesh and blood which he took from your loving womb. Wine cannot refresh us unless it is in something we can drink from. The Holy Spirit could not be poured out upon us without the humanity of your Son. For the salvation which Christ's Passion and Death accomplished is the fount of all the delights and graces bestowed by God on Angels and on men.

Chapter 4

Monday - First Reading

It was love that led God to create. There could be nothing lacking in God, nothing wanting to his goodness or his joy.

It was out of love alone that he willed creation, that there might be beings, apart from himself, who would partake of his infinite goodness and joy. So the Angels came to be, created by God in countless numbers. To them he gave free will, freedom to act, in accordance with their nature, as they willed. As he himself is under no necessity but has created out of love alone, he will that the Angels, whom he designed for eternal happiness with him, should likewise be under no necessity.

He looked for love in response to his love, obedience to his offer of eternal joy.

Yet in the first moment of their creation, there were Angels who chose, freely and deliberately against their Creator, in spite of his infinite love, which called them to love in return. Justly they fell, fixed in their evil will, from an eternal joy into an eternal misery. But not all fell. To those Angels who chose love for love, there was given the contemplation of God in all his glory, power and holiness. From this contemplation, they came to know the eternity of God, that he has no beginning and no end; they learnt what it meant to have him for their Creator; and they saw most clearly how everything they possessed had come to them from his love and his power.

They learnt too that his wisdom had given them a wisdom of their own, but which he allowed them to foresee the future. And it was a joy and consolation to them to know that God in his mercy and love wished to replace, in his own way, those Angels who had forfeited by pride and envy their place in heaven.

In their contemplation of God, the Angels saw with wonder a throne placed next to that of God himself. They knew that the one for whom this throne had been prepared had not yet been created. Yet already they loved this chosen one, and rejoiced as they waited. Their love for each other was

born of their love for God. But between these two loves they saw one who was more lovable than themselves, one whom God loves with great joy more than all his creatures. Virgin Mary, you were the chosen one, destined for that throne near to the throne of God.

It was you whom the Angels loved, after God, from the first moment of their creation, seeing in the contemplation of God, how beautiful he had made themselves, but how much more beautiful he would make you. They saw that in you there would be a love and a joy far greater than their own. They saw too the crown that awaited you, a crown of glory and beauty surpassed only by the majesty of God. They knew how God their Creator was glorified by themselves and they rejoiced. They knew how much more he would be glorified by you, and they rejoiced still more.

Before ever you were created, Mary, God and Angels together rejoiced in you.

Chapter 5

Monday - Second Reading

God's creation of the world and all it contains took place in the instant of his will's expression; and with that design and perfection foreseen by him. Yet there remained still uncreated another work of creation which would surpass what he had already done. You, Mary, are, as it were, another world, a world which God foresaw with greater joy, a world the Angels were more pleased to contemplate, a world of more benefit to those of good will than the whole earth and all it contains.

Mary, we may see in God's act of creation and in all created things an image of your creating. We read that it pleased God to separate the darkness from the light when he created the earth. How much more it pleased him to enlighten you from childhood. The darkness, the time of your infancy, was made light by your knowledge of God, your understanding of God, and the will to love for God which day by day led you on to a love surpassed only by the love of God.

The mental darkness of childhood, without knowledge of God, without reasoning power to guide, is for us a time of defencelessness and danger. But we know that for you, exempt from sin, it was a time of purest innocence. We read that it pleased God to make, together with the stars, two lights - the sun for daytime, the moon for the night. It pleased God still more, Mary, to set in you two heavenly lights, brighter and more beautiful than the sun or the moon: the first - perfect obedience, a radiant light for Angels and men to admire, guiding all who saw it to God himself, who is the light of eternal day; the second - a most complete and trusting faith, the light to men in the darkness of despair and unbelief when your Son chose suffering and death, a light to cast out all shadow of doubt and uncertainty when he rose from the dead. We read that it pleased God to create the stars. The thoughts of your heart, Mary, were more pleasing to him.

We read that it pleased God to create the birds, whose flight and song are a delight to men. All the words which you spoke, Mary, heard also in heaven to the joy of the Angels, were more pleasing still. We read that God created the earth itself, the dry land and the soul; and flowering and fruit-bearing trees of many kinds. Your life, Mary, your occupations and work, were more pleasing to him, for you would give nourishment, and life itself, to all, and your love would make each act of your life more beautiful to God and the Angels than the fairest of flowers are to men. God created the plants, flowers, trees, and fruits, minerals, metals, and precious stones - he has made the earth rich with these things.

Yet he saw in you, Mary, even before your creating, more qualities and virtues than in all earthly things. We read that God's creation was pleasing to him, and that he looked with joy on all he had done. It pleased him still more to create you, Mary, and he looked with greater joy on you, even before your creating, than on this earth and all earthly things. That world and everything in it, - all would be destroyed. Though created before you, Mary, it would not endure. But you, by God's eternal decree, were created to be for ever, and to be for ever united to him in deepest love, created in fullest grace, responding to his grace in all things, and so growing to the perfection of holiness.

Chapter 6

Monday - Third Reading

God is the Creator of all beings, and he is Being itself. Nothing can be or come to be without God. Therefore, this world and all things in it owe their existence to him alone. He is the Creator of all. And Creator, last of all, of Man. To mankind he gave, as he had given to the Angels, the gift of free will. He wished that be free choice man would cling to what was good, and so avoid a just punishment and earn a just reward. Among men, little regard is paid to work done unwillingly, under threat of punishment.

We honour work done willingly out of love, and it is such work that deserves reward. It pleased God rather to leave them free, making known what a reward obedience would win, and what punishment pride and disobedience would incur. God created man, forming him from the dust of the earth. He looked for man's love and obedient service, that so the the places of those Angels who had disobeyed in their pride, and fallen from joy into misery, might be filled once more. They should have received a crown of joy for their love and obedience. Instead, they lost their reward, hating not only the joy they had forfeited but also those virtues which would have assured it to them.

A king is given a crown of gold, calling all to honour him who wears it. But there is a heavenly crown for each virtue, calling even to men on earth to honour one who loves God, calling to Angels in heaven to rejoice, calling to God to reward. What of the crown of God himself? In him all virtues reside, surpassing in every way every other possible good. In him all is virtue. Yet three special virtues stand out in what we know of God, three crowns of incomparable glory. First, that he created the Angels. (It was the envy of such glory that led some of them into their pride and fall.) Second, that he created Man. (The loss of God's glory was man's most grievous loss, when in his folly he let himself be led into sin.) Third, that he created you, Virgin Mary.

The fall of Angels and of man did not lessen the virtue of God, or take from his crown of glory. They were created for God's honour, and they refused it, it is true, just as they were created for their own desire, and yet forfeited it by sin. The wisdom of God turned their sin into an even greater glory for himself. For your creation, Mary, gave such glory to God, that what was refused him by Angels and men was made good a thousand times over. Virgin Mary, our Queen and our hope of salvation, you may truly be called the crown of God's honour. Through you he showed his divine virtue.

From you he won honour and glory greater than from all other creatures. The Angels knew, even before your creating, that by your holiness and humility you would overcome the pride of the Devil and his hatred for man. They had seen how man had fallen into misery, but in their contemplation of God, they still rejoiced, knowing well what great things God would do, Mary, through your lowliness, when his creating brought you to be.

Chapter 7

Tuesday - First Reading

We read in the Bible of Adam's original state of happiness. Then of his disobedience to God, which brought so much suffering and sorrow. We are not told that he continued in disobedience. From his conduct after Cain had killed Abel, his refraining from intercourse with Eve until he knew that this was no longer the will of God, we may judge that the love and service of God was his first thought. His sorrow was not so much the unhappiness he had brought on himself, but rather the offence he had committed against God.

Created by God, owing his existence and his happiness to God, he had turned against God, and so justly deserved God's anger. This was true sorrow, bringing with it repentance and humility. And with this true sorrow

came also consolation from God. One thing, and one thing only, could have fully consoled him - the promise that God himself should come as man, of Adam's own race, and by love and humility redeem that race which his pride had deprived of life.

That God should be born as men are born was unthinkable. Adam and Eve owed their beginning in some way to a special creation by God. Even this would not be fitting for the coming of God to earth. It would seem that Adam understood from God's words something of what was to be. At least, we may picture him foreseeing the future, foreseeing a woman, like Eve in womanhood, but lovelier and holier than all of his race, a virgin and mother, bringing God himself to this world. We may think of him grieving at the words spoken to Eve by the Devil.

But rejoicing, his sorrow turned to joy, at the thought, Mary, of your words to the Angel. We may think of him grieving that Eve his wife, created by God from his body, had deceived him and drawn him on to eternal death. But rejoicing that you, Virgin Mary, would bear in all purity Christ, the Son of God, to restore man to life. Grieving that Eve's first act was of disobedience; rejoicing that you, Mary, would be a daughter of God, most dear to him in all things, ever obedient to his will.

Grieving that Eve had been tempted, in the sight of God and all the Angels, by the false promise of being made like to God; rejoicing that in the sight of God and the Angels, you, Mary, would acknowledge yourself the Handmaid of God. Grieving that Eve had offended God, and brought about the condemnation of man; rejoicing that your word to God should bring such joy to yourself and to all men. Grieving that Eve had closed to man the gate of heaven; rejoicing that your word had opened that gate again to yourself and to all who sought to enter. So we may think of Adam rejoicing with great joy at the thought, Mary, of your coming, as we know the Angels rejoiced, before the creation of the world, foreseeing your creation by God.

Chapter 8

Tuesday - Second Reading

Adam's punishment made him see the justice and mercy of God. Throughout his life he feared to offend God and was guided in all things by love for God. This way of life he handed on to those who came after him. With time they forgot God's justice and mercy. With time they forgot God himself, and that he was their Creator. They believed only what pleased them, immersing themselves in pleasure and sin.

So came the flood, when God destroyed all men on earth, saving only Noe and those with him in the Ark, through whom he willed to people the earth again. Once again men multiplied on the earth, and once again they fell, tempted away from God, turning to the worship of false gods and idols. God's mercy and fatherly love led him to intervene, and he chose one who was a faithful follower of his law, Abraham, to make a covenant with him and his descendants. He fulfilled his desire for a son, and Isaac was born. And he promised that from his descendants, Christ, his son, would come.

It is possible that Abraham, by God's permission, foresaw many things. We may think of him as having foreseen Mary, the Mother of Christ. We may think of him rejoicing in her, and loving her more than Isaac his son.

It was not greed or ambition that led Abraham to acquire lands and wealth. It was not for his own sake that he desired a son. He was like a gardener of some great lord's estate. He had planted a vine, and planned to make cuttings from that vine, and so in time make for his master a vineyard of great worth. Like a good gardener, he knew that each plant needed careful attention, and proper feeding, if it was to bear good fruit. One plant in particular he cherished, watching its growth with great delight. He knew that it would be the choicest of all the trees in his vineyard.

His master would love to rest in the shade beneath it, praising its beauty and the sweetness of its fruit. If Abraham was the gardener, then the vine which he first planted was Isaac; the cuttings of that vine his descendants; the feeding of each plant the goods of this world which Abraham acquired for the sake of Isaac and his race; the most cherished tree, that tree of beauty and sweetness, was the Virgin Mary; and the Master for whom Abraham the gardener worked, the owner of the vineyard, was God himself, who waited till the vineyard (the race of Isaac) was established, and then, coming, saw with content, the perfect vine in the midst of his vineyard, the Virgin Mother of God. The beauty of this tree was the perfect and sinless life of Mary; the sweetness of the fruit, the acts of her life; the shade of that tree, her virginal womb, overshadowed by the Spirit of God.

If Abraham then foresaw what was to be, he rejoiced in his many descendants, but most of all in that one of his descendants who, as Virgin Mother, was to bear the Son of God. This faith and holy desire Abraham handed on to Isaac, his son: your oath, he had said to the servant sent for Isaac's wife, must be sworn on the One who is to come of my race. Isaac too handed on this same faith and desire, when he blessed his son Jacob.

And Jacob in blessing his twelve sons, handed on this same faith and desire in his turn to Judah. God so loved Mary, the Mother of his Son, even before the creation of the world, and before her creating, that he gave to those he had specially chosen as his friends some foreknowledge of her, for their consolation. First to the Angels, then to Adam, and then to the Patriarchs, the creation of Mary was a thing of wonder and joy.

Chapter 9

Tuesday - Third Reading

God is all love, and all loving; infinite in love, and infinite in loving. We may truly say - God is love. He makes known his love to those who love, and all things speak to them of the love of God. See how great was

his love for his People, the People of Israel. He delivered them from the Egyptians, and led them out from captivity, into a fruitful land, that they might live there in peace and prosperity. It was this prosperity that was envied by the Devil, and in his hatred for all that was loved by God, he tempted God's People, and by his deceits, led them time and and again into sin.

They had the Law of Moses; they were the People whom God had made his own, through his covenant with Abraham; yet they fell into idolatry and worshipped false gods. God looked on them and found there among them some who still served him with true faith and love, following his law. To strengthen these followers of his, amid the dangers that surrounded them, to confirm them in their faith and love, he raised up among them the Prophets, men who came not only for the help of God's own, but also to rescue those who had made themselves enemies of God.

In time, like the mountain streams which join, and then join to other streams as they descend, increasing ever in volume and power, carrying all before them, down at last to meet other waters and in the lower lands form into the great rivers, the Holy Spirit filled the hearts of his Prophets, and first one, then another, then more raised their voices, to speak as he inspired them, till their sound filled the ears of many, to comfort and console, to call back and restore. The sweetest sound of their voices was that news of joy - that God himself would be born of a Virgin, to make amends for the evil which Satan, through Adam, had caused to man; that he would redeem man, and rescue him from his misery, restoring to him eternal life.

Joy too, that God the Father so willed this redemption of man that he would not spare even his only-begotten Son: that the Son so willed to obey the Father, that he would take to himself our human flesh: that the Holy Spirit, though inseparable from the Father, willed to be sent by the Son. The Prophets knew that the Son of God would come into this world, to be light in our darkness, brighter than the sun at dawn, to proclaim God's justice and love. But they knew he would not come unheralded. As the morning star heralds the sun, they foresaw that a star would rise in Israel,

fairest of all the stars, in brightness and beauty surpassed only by the sun itself. This star with the Virgin Mary, who would be Mother of Christ, her love surpassed only by the love of God, her heart ever responding to the will of God.

This news was given by God to his Prophets, to console them in their labour of teaching, and encourage them in their trials.

For they grieved at the pride and sinfulness of the People, who neglected the Law of Moses, rejected God's love, and incurred his anger. But they rejoiced, Mary, in you, foreseeing that God, that giver of all law, would receive back to his grace those who had sinned, for the sake of your humility and holiness of life. They grieved to see the Temple empty and desolate, and the worship of God neglected.

They rejoiced, Mary, to foresee the creation of that holy temple, your pure body, where God himself would love to reside. They grieved at the destruction of the gates and the walls of the holy city, broken by armies, invaded by sin. They rejoiced, Mary, to foresee how you would stand firm, against all attack, a strong citadel where Christ would arm himself, the gate through which he would come forth to his conflict with the Devil and his own. To the Prophets, as to the Patriarchs, your coming, Mary, was a thing of wonder and joy.

Chapter 10

Wednesday - First Reading

Before God made known his law to Moses, man had to live without a rule of life. Those who loved God, did what they thought was God's will. Those who rejected his love, and did not fear to do so, acted as they chose. To dispel their ignorance, God in his goodness made known his law, teaching first the love of God, then love for others, then his will concerning marriage, its holiness and binding force, its purpose in his plan - the growth of his people. The union of man and woman in a holy marriage was most pleasing to God, for he willed to choose the child of

such a union as the Mother of Christ. The eagle, flying above the earth, looks down at the trees, and choosing with its sharp eyes the tallest tree, one firmly rooted to withstand the storms, one that cannot be climbed, one that nothing can fall on, builds there its nest, God sees, with penetrating gaze, all things, both present and future.

He looked therefore among all men and women, from the beginning to the end of time, for a husband and wife fit for the bearing of the child of his choice. He found none so worthy as Joachim and Anne, who lived together in holiness and a love for each other born of their love for him. It was to them he entrusted the one who was to be Mother of his Son. She was to be, as it were, the eagle's nest, in which he could find protection and shelter. Joachim and Anne were the tall tree in which this nest would be built, firmly rooted in a union based on the love and honour of God; the branches of this tree their lifelong thought for the will of God, and their desire for a child, not for their own sake, but to beget one who would grow to love God and serve him as they themselves did.

The tallness of this tree, beyond the reach of the winds, and higher than all around, was the height of holiness which Joachim and Anne had attained, beyond the attacks of Satan, untroubled, except by the thought that God's honour was many times assailed by the sins of many, with no thought of honour or worldly possessions, no pride or ambition to move them from their selfless love of God.

God knew that for the birth of the Mother of Christ, none holier could be found than Joachim and Anne. What a treasure you held, blessed Anne, while she who was to be Mother of God rested in your womb. How precious to God that seed of Mary's life in your womb, more precious than the offspring of all men on earth. Anne became God's treasure-house, keeping safe this most precious thing, this seed of so precious a life.

God saw it and watched over it, for as his Son was to say - where one's treasure is, there is one's heart. The Angels looked on this treasure with joy, knowing how precious it was to God their Creator. It was a holy and blessed day, to be honoured by all, the day when this precious seed

was first sown. God himself and the Angels greeted that day with great rejoicing.

Chapter 11

Wednesday - Second Reading

That seed of life was ready, and at God's chosen moment, life began as he infused into it a living soul. We see the bees in summer, busy making flowers for honey; led by instinct to their sweetness, they seem often to wait for the buds to open. God foresaw, as he foresees all things, the birth of Mary, and he waited with joy as she lay hidden in her mother's womb, for he knew that none ever of those to be born would equal her in holiness. None would so make known to men his infinite love.

The infusing of Mary's soul in the womb of Blessed Anne was more beautiful than the dawn of the most beautiful day. As we so often long for the dawn, so Angels and men longed for her birth. Where the nights are short in summer, so that there is little darkness, people do not notice the dawn; they wait for the sun itself, thinking of their crops and their fruits. Where the nights are quite long, even in summer, the dawn is watched for and welcomed, not only for the coming of the sun to the fields, but because men weary of the night and the darkness.

The Angels in heaven did not await the coming of Mary that they might see Christ, for they were ever in the light of his presence; they longed for her, so that the love of God might be made known in the world, so that men who loved God might be strengthened in their love, and then they, the Angels, could go out to gather them as an everlasting harvest for God. But men, living in this world of sorrow and hardship, desired the coming of Mary that they might see Christ their Saviour. They longed for her coming, that they might learn from her perfect life how man should live. The Virgin Mary is foretold as the branch which would grow from the root of the father of David, to bear a flower on which the Spirit of God would rest. In her mother's womb - how light Anne's burden! - Mary was

the tender branch which would soon come forth. The flower that branch would bear was Christ.

He himself, from the moment of her assent to God's message, was a richer and infinitely sweeter nourishment than blessed Anne had given to her. Though Mary was to him the food of life, giving her own flesh and blood to be his, that he might appear in true humanity, he was to Mary her heavenly food, that she might bear him as her child, though he was truly the Son of God. They were Mother and Son, Son and Mother, yet this Son was truly the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, eternally with him, eternally united with him and the Holy Spirit, eternally the Person of the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit lives in glory, eternally One.

Chapter 12

Wednesday - Third Reading

In Father, Son and Holy Ghost, there is only the one Divinity. There is ever the one divine will. A fire with three flames is but the one fire. The three flames of love in God are the one love of his will, burning to fulfil his one divine purpose. The love of the Father was seen most brightly by the Angels when they knew his will to give his Son for the redemption of man. The love of the Son proceeding from the Father was seen most brightly when the son willed to deprive himself of his glory and take the form of a slave.

The love of the Holy Spirit was seen most brightly in that readiness to make known in many ways the one will of the Three. All heaven was ablaze with these flames of God's love, to the delight of the Angels. Yet all heaven must wait; must wait for the coming of Mary. The redemption of man, willed and foreseen by God, could not take place without her. A flame of divine love was to be kindled in Mary which would rise up to God and return so filled with his love that no corner of this world would be left cold and in darkness.

When Mary was born, she was like a new lamp, all ready to be lit; to be lit by God with a light burning like the three-fold flame of his own love. The first flame of her love was her choice, for God's glory, to be ever a virgin. So pleasing was this to the Father that he willed to entrust to her his beloved Son, that Son who is inseparable from the Divinity of himself and the Holy Spirit. The second flame of her love was her humility, so pleasing to the Son that he willed to take from her a true human body, and that humanity which was destined to be honoured in heaven above all things. The third flame of her love was her obedience, which brought to her from the Holy Spirit the fullness of grace.

It is true that these flames of Mary's love were not lit at the moment of her birth. She was still, as other children, only a little one, unaware of God's will. Yet God took more pleasure in her than in all other beings. She was like a sweet-sounding harp, not yet in tune; but he whose treasure she was knew how lovely the music he would make with her.

It may be believed that Christ's knowledge was not lacking in anything due when he was conceived in Mary's womb. We may believe too that Mary developed in understanding earlier than others. Since the coming of Mary was such joy to God and the Angels, men too must rejoice, and give glory and honour to God, who chose her from all his creation by eternal decree and willed that she should be born among sinners, to bring forth in sinlessness the Saviour of the world.

Chapter 13

Thursday - First Reading

Speaking of the beauty of Mary, we think of lovely things: her sacred body is like a vase of purest crystal; her soul like a lantern of clearest light; her mind like a fountain of water rising up into the air, then falling in cool streams to the deep valley. Passing from infancy to childhood, to the age when she was able to understand, she began to think of the existence of

God, and how he made all things, and especially man, for his own eternal glory, and how his justice embraces all things.

Her thoughts reached out to God, as the waters of the fountain rise into the air; then, like those waters flowing down to the valley, her thoughts returned to herself and brought her a most profound humility. The Church sings of Christ leaving and returning to the Father, though he was ever with the Father and the Father ever with him. Mary's thoughts reached up to heaven in contemplation and grasped God by faith. Then in the love with which God possessed her, she turned her mind again to God and to herself, never losing her thought of God. Together with hope and trust, and with holy fear, the fire of this love inflamed her heart, as the flame is the brightness of the lantern.

She understood the perfect subjection of body to soul, and no discord ever troubled her, so that in body she was purer than purest crystal. How soon she learnt to appreciate God's love, and treasure it with all her being! Think of this love as a lily which God had planted, with a threefold root, bearing three flowers of great beauty. The three roots are three most powerful virtues, protecting her body. The three flowers, three adornments of her soul, which gave great joy to God and the Angels.

The first of the three virtues was her abstinence, her right use of God's gifts of food and drink - no over-indulgence to make her slow in the service of God, no unwise austerity to impair her health. The second was her wakefulness, so that she rested no longer than was necessary - not wasting God's time in laziness, but not fatiguing herself to the detriment of her work. The third was her command over her will, so that she was not easily wearied in body, and never over-anxious or over-excited.

The first adornment of her soul was her love for the things of God rather than the things of earth, no matter how beautiful these might seem to be. The things men so often prize, possessions and wealth, were utterly distasteful to her. The second adornment was her appreciation of the infinite distance between worldly honours and spiritual glory. This world's praises were as abhorrent to her as the poisoning air of corruption. The

third adornment was her love for all that God loves, her repugnance for all that was hateful and displeasing to him. She sought in all things the true sweetness of God, and no taste of bitterness was permitted to endure in her after her death.

With such beauty of soul, Mary surpassed all other created things. God willed that only through her should his promise be fulfilled. Her love left no blemish or defect, not even the smallest. In nothing could the enemy claim victory over her. If then she was so pleasing in the sight of God and the Angels, may we not think that she had also great earthly beauty? Those who saw her looked with delight, and knew that her loveliness was born of her love for God. They saw her, and loved to see her, and were led to a new love for God.

They watched her, and loved to be with her, and knew that no evil could touch them, nothing sinful attract them, in the presence of her beauty and holiness.

Chapter 14

Thursday - Second Reading

With our slow and clouded minds, it is hard for us to appreciate that moment when Mary first knew God and gave herself to him. His will became her one desire and her joy. She saw how she owed everything to his creating; but she knew that according to his plan, her will was free, to choose or refuse his will and his way. She saw the blessings which God had already bestowed, and for these alone she chose to love him in return, and to love him for ever.

Soon she was to understand how much more he would do, She learnt that he who created all would not rest content, but would himself come to his creation as redeemer of his creatures. And this out of love alone. She learnt that man's will, free to choose good or evil, could make satisfaction

to God for sin, or incur his anger by sin. In that moment of understanding, she chose once for all her course through life.

The captain of a ship knows what dangers lie ahead, and he charts his voyage to avoid the storms. He watches the ship's course, and works out the distance sailed, and the distance still to sail before arriving in port. Every rope, every piece of equipment is in place and ready for use. The cargo he carries must reach port as quickly as possible. Every detail of the voyage must be worked out ahead. Mary was like the captain of a ship.

As soon as she had understood God's will, she set her course according to his commandments. She was watchful at all times that her attention should never be distracted from God. She took care, when those around her spoke of their ambitions, their successes or failures, not to let herself become less devout in her service of God. Anything contrary to God's law she knew at once as a danger to be avoided at all cost.

With this self-training and discipline, all that she did was good. All that she said, all that she listened to, all that she gave her attention to, was sensible and wise.

Her work was useful to herself and to others, and each journey she made had some good reason. The trials of life she accepted with patience and joy. Her one thought was God. Her one desire was to be for ever with him, to offer to him in return for all he had done for her all her love and her praise. So perfect a life won her from God, who is the giver of all good things, the highest holiness and glory. It is no wonder that God loved her more than all other creatures.

She alone of all men and women was ever sinless and immune from sin. How near she was to heaven at that moment when the Angel Gabriel greeted her - Hail, full of grace! How pure, how holy she was, at that moment when the Father entrusted to her his only Son, at her assenting - Be it done unto me, according to thy word! At that moment of time, Divinity was united with humanity, humanity with Divinity; the Son of God was made man; the Son of the Father became the Son of Mary.

Chapter 15

Thursday - Third Reading

This union between God and man, between Christ and the Virgin Mary, only God can comprehend. The Son of God, truly God, all present and present to all, whose eternal dwelling in heaven is the Blessed Trinity itself, made for himself on earth a dwelling-place in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit, who is ever in the Father and in the Son, rested in Mary, filling her, both body and soul, with his presence. The Son, who is ever with the Father and the Holy Spirit in heaven, acquired for himself as man a new dwelling on earth. The Father too, with the Holy Spirit, dwelt in a new way on earth, in the humanity of the Son, for the Father with the Holy Spirit must be ever in the Son. The Son alone took flesh.

He alone took our humanity. True God, he came as man to men, withholding from the eyes of men his Divinity seen ever by the Angels in heaven. All who hold the true faith must rejoice unceasingly at this union achieved through Mary. The Son of God took in her womb true flesh and blood, and true humanity, not losing his Divinity: in divinity was humanity, in humanity Divinity. Christ did not lose his Divinity, nor Mary her virginity.

It would be utterly wrong to think that God could not have done such a thing, for all things are possible to God. It would be equally wrong to think that he would not have done such a thing for his own, for this would deny the goodness of God. If we believe then that God could and would do such a thing, why do not all men love God with all their love?

Picture some king, honoured by all, with great power and possessions, and someone dear to him suffering great insult and injury; if the king took on himself the burden of his friend, if he gave all his wealth to save him from poverty, still more, if he offered his life for his friend, would not this

be the greatest love he could show? But no love of men on earth could equal the love of God in heaven. No love could equal that love which led God to condescend to our need, and entrust himself to the womb of the Virgin Mary and take there our humanity.

Mary is like that bush which Moses saw, burning yet never consumed by the fire. God himself was there, till Moses knew and obeyed his word. And to him he made known his name - I am who am, the name of the eternal. The Son of God dwelt in Mary, till the span of time between conception and birth was completed. At conception, he had taken, by his Divinity, full possession of Mary's pure body. At birth he came forth, with his Divinity united for ever to true humanity. But as the sweet perfume of the rose leaves the rose still as lovely, his coming forth was no lessening, but truly a glorification of the virginity of Mary.

To God, to the Angels, to Adam, to the Patriarchs and the Prophets, and to countless servants of God, this Burning Bush, which was Mary, brought joy beyond words - Mary, in the fire of her love, conceiving the Son of God - the Son of God in obedience to the Father, resting in her, to be born, true man, true God, of a Mother and Virgin, a Virgin-Mother. To ourselves also, and to all our race, this must bring great rejoicing and consolation. The Son of God, he who with the Father and the Spirit is the eternal God, has taken our humanity, through the love of the Virgin Mary.

Her love embraces all things that belong to God. We then may claim, and be sure of her intercession. We can say truly than man who deserved eternal death through sin can acquire eternal life only through her. From Mary, the Son of God came in perfect humanity, to fight as man with Satan who had subjugated man. To Mary, men must resort for strength against Satan's temptings. Mary is the gateway by which Christ entered into this world, to open to man the gate of heaven. Pray then, pray then to Mary, that at death she may come to us, to secure for us entry into the eternal kingdom of Christ, her Son.

Chapter 16

Friday - First Reading

We are told that Mary was afraid when the Angel appeared and spoke to her. It was not fear of any bodily harm to herself, but dismay at the thought that this might be a trick of Satan, to lead her into sin. At the moment when her mind first knew God and his holy will, she had chosen for herself a life of love, and this brought with it a wise and holy fear of God.

It is our delight to call Mary a rose of great beauty. We know that the lovelier and healthier the rose, the stronger and sharper are the thorns which surround it. If Mary is a rose of beauty, she will not be untouched by the sharp thorns of trial and sorrow. Indeed, as the days of her life went by, her sorrows increased in bitterness and pressed more heavily upon her. Her first sorrow was that fear of God which her knowledge of his existence and his will had brought her. It was a sorrow to her that in all she did, she must keep in mind the thought and threat of sin. She directed each thought, word and work to God, but there was always the fear that some defect might creep in to lessen its value in his eyes. How foolish are those who deliberately and without fear throw themselves into all kinds of sin, bringing on themselves suffering and sorrow.

Mary was sinless, and immune from sin. Everything she did pleased God. In every way she was entirely pleasing to him. Yet she never allowed herself to be free from the fear of displeasing him. A greater sorrow still was in her heart, for she knew from the writings of the Prophets that God willed to come as man, and suffer as man. In her love for God, this caused her great grief, though she did not yet know that she was to be the Mother of God. When that moment arrived, the moment when she knew that the Son of God had become her Son, to take in her womb that human body which was to suffer as the Prophets had foretold - who could measure her joy?

Who could measure her sorrow? Like the rose, she had grown in beauty, but the thorns had grown too, stronger and sharper and more

piercing. To Mary it was joy beyond words that her son should come in humility to lead man to heaven, saving him from the penalty which Adam's pride had incurred, the misery of hell. It was great sorrow that the sin of Adam by which man rebelled in both body and soul should require the redeeming death of her Son in such agony of body and soul.

It was great joy to her to conceive her Son in sinlessness and purity. It was great sorrow to her that this so loved son was born to suffer a shameful death, and that she herself would be there to stand and see. Great joy to know that he would rise from death, and win in return for his Passion an everlasting honour and glory; great sorrow to know that this glory would not be won except by the agony and shame of the Cross. The perfect rose blooms in beauty on its stem, and our delight is not spoiled by the sharp thorns around it.

The sharp thorns of Mary's sorrow piercing her heart could not change her or weaken her will, and in her suffering she accepted whatever God's will should demand of her. We call her a Rose of Jericho, for men say that nowhere can so lovely a rose be found. In her holiness, Mary is more beautiful than all mankind, surpassed only by her Son. To God and the Angels in heaven, her patience and willing endurance brought joy. To all on earth, it must be a joy to meditate on her sufferings so willingly accepted, and on that consolation she had ever in her heart, that all was the will of God.

Chapter 17

Friday - Second Reading

The Prophets foretold many things about Christ. They spoke of the death of the Innocent One and the pains he would suffer to win for men on earth an eternal life with him in heaven. They foretold and set in writing that the Son of God, to save all men, would be bound, scourged, mocked, led out to be crucified, and reviled as he hung on the Cross. They knew

that the immortal God would take man's mortal form. They knew that he willed to suffer as man for man.

If the Prophets foresaw these things, would not Mary foresee them, even more clearly? She was the Mother predestined for the Son of God. How could she not have foreseen his sufferings when he took flesh in her womb for this very purpose? The presence of the Holy Spirit would enlighten her, so that she knew better than the Prophets that things which they, through the Holy Spirit, foretold.

At the moment of Christ's birth, as she held him for the first time in her arms, Mary foresaw the fulfilment of prophecy. As she wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, she foresaw the scourging of his flesh which would make him a leper in the eyes of men. The hands and feet of her Child brought the thought of the nails which would pierce them. The face of her Son, beautiful beyond the beauty of men, was the face men would spit on. His cheeks would feel the blows of their hatred. His ears would hear the curses of their defiance.

His eyes would be blinded by the blood from the wounds in his head. His mouth would taste the bitterness of gall. His arms would be bound, then stretched in agony on the Cross; and his heart, empty at last of blood, would shrink in death. No part of that sacred body would escape the bitterness of that most bitter death. And when all breathing ceased, there would still be the soldier's sharp spear to pierce his lifeless heart. Mary rejoiced as no mother ever rejoiced when her Son, the Son of God, was born, true God, true man, mortal in his humanity, immortal in his Divinity.

But Mary knew sorrow deeper than the sorrows of all mothers, foreseeing the Passion of her Son. Her joy was beyond words, but her joy brought with it a sorrow deeper than all the sorrows of this world.

A mother's joy is complete when her child is born and she sees it healthy and perfectly formed. Her pain and anxiety are over. Mary rejoiced at Christ's birth, but she knew that no moment of her life would be free of sorrow. The Prophets foretold, long before the coming of Christ, his sufferings and death. Simeon foretold, in the presence of Mary and her

Child, the piercing of her heart by a sword of sorrow. We know that the mind is more sensitive to pain even than the body.

We know that the soul of Mary, even before the death of her Son, would feel that sword of sorrow more sharply than all women on earth would feel the suffering of childbearing. Each day brought nearer the sufferings of Christ. Each day brought nearer the piercing of Mary's heart. It was the compassion of Christ alone which enabled her, by his presence and his words, to bear day by day such piercing sorrow.

Chapter 18

Friday - Third Reading

You shall seek me and shall not find me'. These words of Christ were the sharp point of the sword of sorrow, entering Mary's heart. That sword pierced deeper at the betrayal of Judas, and at the arrest of Christ, when he willed to be taken by the enemies of justice and truth. Deeper still at each insult offered to Christ, with each suffering inflicted on him. The sorrow of her heart overflowed into all the members of her body. She saw how cruelly Christ was struck, and more cruelly beaten and scourged. She heard the sentence of death passed by the Jews. She heard the cries of the people - Crucify him, away with him.

She saw him led out, bound as a criminal, to a traitor's death. She saw him struggling to carry his Cross, dragged forward and whipped as he stumbled, led like some wild beast rather than a lamb to the slaughter. As Isaias had foretold, he went meekly to his death; like the lamb that is led to the slaughter house, like the sheep that is dumb before its shearers.

Christ was patient in his sufferings. Mary endured patiently the sorrow of his sufferings. She followed him, even to the place of death. She saw the wounds of his scourging, the crown of thorns, his cheeks disfigured with blows, his face covered with blood, and she wept in sorrow.

She saw him stretched on the Cross, and heard the blows of the hammer as the nails pierced his hands and feet. So great was her suffering and sorrow that her strength almost failed her as she stood by and watched. She saw the vinegar and gall offered for his lips to taste. and her own lips could not move in prayer. She heard his cry - My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?, and saw his head fall forward and his body become rigid as he breathed forth his spirit. She stood and saw how he died. Then truly was her heart quite pierced by the sword of sorrow. It was the strength God gave that alone saved her from dying in such sorrow. To see her Son, stripped and bleeding, dying, pierced by a lance, mocked by those who stood by, jeered at by soldiers, deserted by all but a few of his chosen ones, abandoned by so many whom he had won to justice and truth, to see this most bitter death - could there be sorrow so deep as her?

We read that once, when the Ark of God fell into the hands of enemies, the wife of one of God's priests died for sorrow. How much greater was the sorrow of Mary, for she saw the body of her Son, which the Ark prefigured, nailed to the wood of the Cross. Her love for her Son was love for the Son of God, greater than the loves of all men. If the loss of the Ark could cause sorrow and death, the death of Christ would have brought Mary to death but for God's gift to support so grievous a sorrow. By his death, Christ opened the gateway to heaven, and won for his own their entry into joy. Mary looked up from the depths of her sorrow, as one coming back from the gates of death.

Her faith never faltered that Christ would rise again, and in this faith she could comfort many whose faith had failed. They took him down from the Cross, and wrapped him in fine linen with spices, and laid him in the tomb. Then all left. Few still had faith that he would rise. Little by little, the sorrows of Mary's heart lightened, and she felt the first sweetness of consolation. The sufferings of her Son were at an end. She knew that on the third day he would rise, would rise with his humanity united again to his Divinity, would rise to everlasting honour and glory, to suffer, to die no more.

Chapter 19

Saturday - First Reading

We read that the Queen of Sheba made the long journey from her own lands in the south to visit Solomon the King. Her journey was not wasted, for she found great delight in his words. No gifts were too precious for her to give, no praise too high, and she departed in admiration of such great wisdom. The Virgin Mary spent long hours in thought, considering the course of events in this world, and all the things that this world holds dear. Nothing delighted or attracted her, except the wisdom she had learned from God. This was her desire and her search, and she did not rest till she had found it in Christ.

In the Son of God she found wisdom infinitely greater than Solomon's. The Queen of Sheba was overcome with wonder as she contemplated the wisdom of Solomon. Mary was overcome with sorrow as she pondered the loving wisdom of Christ, who saw salvation in suffering, and willed to save man from subjection to Satan by his sufferings and cross. When at last the sufferings of Christ were over, Mary looked up from the depths of her sorrow, ever offering herself and her will to God for his glory, gifts most precious to him. Gifts too of another kind, for many were led to the truth of God by her faith.

No words or works of men were so powerful to bring men to God. Many lost faith when they saw Christ die. She alone withstood the unbelief of men, seeing in Christ her Son the Son of God, over whose Godhead death could have no dominion.

When the third day came, it brought bewilderment and anxiety to the Disciples. The women going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus sought him and could not find him. The Apostles were gathered together in their fear, guarding the doors. Then, surely, though we are not told of this in the Gospels, Mary spoke of the resurrection of her Son, that he had truly risen from death, that he was alive again in all his humanity, no more subject to death, risen to an eternal glory. We read that Mary Magdalen and the Apostles were first to see the risen Christ. But we may believe that

Mary his Mother knew of his rising before all others, and that she was the first to see him.

It was Mary in her lowliness who first gave praise and adoration to the risen Christ. When Christ ascended to the glory of his kingdom, the Virgin Mary remained on earth. We cannot know what her presence meant to so many. Those who loved God were strengthened in their love; those who had turned from him were brought back to his love. The Apostles looked to her for guidance and counsel. The Martyrs found in her, courage to face suffering and death. The Confessors of the Faith were strengthened in their believing. Virgins were drawn to her purity. Widows were consoled by her sorrows. Husbands and wives found in her a pattern of perfection. All who heard and obeyed the word of God found in Mary great comfort and help.

Whenever the Apostles came to her, she was able to teach them about Christ, and help them to understand. The Martyrs rejoiced to suffer for Christ, for he had suffered for all. They remembered the long years of sorrow borne so patiently by Mary his Mother, and they bore their martyrdom even more readily. The Confessors, meditating on Mary, learnt many things about the truths of the Faith. From her example, they learnt too the wise use of earthly things, food, drink and sleep, work and rest.

And how to order their lives in all things to the honour and glory of God. Virgins learnt from Mary's example true chastity in virtue. They learnt too the wise use of their time, how to avoid vanity and foolish talk, and see all things in the light of true holiness. Widows learnt from her, consolation in sorrow, strength against temptation, and humble submission to God's will. With a mother's love, Mary could never have wished for the death of her Son, still less for the death of the Son of God. Yet she willed in all things the will of God. She chose for God's sake the humble acceptance of suffering and sorrow.

Husbands and wives learnt from Mary true love for each other, in body and in soul, and the union of their wills, as of their flesh, in all that the will of God demanded. They learnt how she had united herself for ever

with God by faith, and never in any way shown resistance to his divine will.

Chapter 20

Saturday - Second Reading

We read in the Gospels these words of Christ - the measure you give shall be the measure you receive. No one on earth can know the glory of Mary, the Mother of God. She who on earth gave so much receives now in heaven a measure of glory beyond the whole of creation. When it pleased Christ to call her from this earth, there awaited her all whom her holiness had helped. God himself, whose love had been made known only through her, awaited her coming to adorn her with a glory surpassed only by his own. She was raised to the highest place in heaven, to be Queen, not only of his earthly creation, but Queen over the Angels for ever.

The Angels rejoiced in this Queen, made for ever obedient to her by their love for her. Those Angels too who had fallen from God were made subject to her; not temptation of theirs could withstand her; no one calling with love for her help would be left unprotected; the tempters would choose rather an increase of their misery than the opposing of her power. Of all creatures the most humble, Mary is now the most glorious, the most perfect in beauty, and nearest to God himself. As gold surpassed all other metals, Angels and men surpass all the creatures of God. Gold needs the fire and the work of the goldsmith before it can be fashioned into a work of beauty.

Mary, more perfect than all Angels and men, was fashioned by her own will, in the fire of the Holy Spirit, into a thing of the highest beauty. A work of art wrought in gold needs the light to be seen; in the light of the sun, it will be seen in all its perfection. All that the Virgin Mary accomplished, and the beauty of her soul, could not be seen while she was living on earth. Lit by the light of God himself in heaven, she appeared in the fulness of beauty. All heaven gave praise to her, and to that beauty of

soul with which her will had adorned her, a beauty beyond the beauty of all creation, near even to God's own perfection. Mary is enthroned for ever, on that throne placed near to the throne of God.

No one is nearer than she to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, the Holy Spirit is in the Father and the Son. The Son, when he became man in the Virgin's womb, was not thereby divided from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He took our humanity, not losing his Divinity, as Mary acquired Motherhood without loss to her Virginity. God gave to Mary, therefore, a place near to himself, so that she is ever with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and ever associated with this Blessed Trinity in all things.

Who could measure the joy in heaven when God raised Mary from this earth? Who will measure our joy when, seeing God face to face, we see too the glory of Mary? The Angels rejoicing in Mary glorify God. The death of Christ has filled again the places made vacant in heaven. The raising of Mary to heaven has increased even the blessedness of heaven. To Adam and Eve, to the Patriarchs and Prophets, to all who died before Christ and were released by his death, to all who have died since Christ's death and been taken to heaven, Mary's entry into heaven is an everlasting joy and delight.

They praise God for her glory, for the honour he has bestowed on her as the one who bore in holiness Christ, their Redeemer and Lord. We may picture the Apostles and many holy ones around Mary as her last hour approached. We know the reverence and honour they paid to her at the moment of her death. We believe that she died, as all others die. We believe that her Son, the Son of God, took her to himself, and raised her, body and soul, to live for ever in heaven.

Chapter 21

Saturday - Third Reading

The Son of God, the Son of Mary, Christ who is Truth itself, has said to us - return not evil for evil, but return good for evil. Will not he himself therefore, for he is God, return good for good, and give great reward even for little? He promises in the Gospel that for every good work he will repay a hundredfold. What then will be Mary's reward? Her life was a life of countless good works, a life entirely pleasing to God, a life ever free from defect and unmarred by sin. In all things she will chose, and every member of her body responded gladly to that command. The justice of God has willed that we must rise, body and soul, at the last day, to be repaid for our works.

Body and soul we shall stand before God, for in all things, body and soul act as one. Christ's sinless body rose from the dead, and is now and for ever united in glory with his Divinity. The sinless body of Mary, together with her soul, was taken up by God after her death into heaven, and she is honoured there, body and soul, for ever. No mind of ours can comprehend the perfection and glory which is Christ's as reward for his sufferings. No mind of ours can comprehend the glory which is Mary's, in body and soul, for her perfect obedience to God.

The holiness of Mary, those virtues adorning her soul, glorified God her Creator, and she is crowned now in heaven with his reward for those virtues.

The good works of Mary, accomplished by her perfect subjection of body to soul, proclaim for ever her praise. She has done all things as God willed, and omitted nothing that God desired, to win an eternal heavenly glory of both body and soul. No soul, except Christ's, was so filled with holiness and merit as the pure soul of Mary. No body, except the sacred body of her Son, was so worthy to be glorified for its purity and perfection as the pure body of Mary. The justice of God flashed forth when he drove Adam from the garden of Paradise for tasting the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. The mercy of God entered sweetly into this world when the Virgin Mary was born, whom we may fittingly name the tree of life.

The justice of God drove out Adam and Eve into instant exile and misery, for their disobeying. The mercy of God gently invites and attracts

to the glory of heaven, all who seek life in obeying. Mary, the tree of life, grew up in this world, to the joy of the Angels in heaven. They longed for the fruit of this tree, which was Christ, and they rejoiced, as they rejoiced in their own eternal happiness, that the great love of God would be made known among men, and their own heavenly ranks increased in number.

The Angel Gabriel rejoiced to be sent with God's message to Mary, and his greeting was spoken with great love for her. When Mary, in the perfection of her holiness and humility, assented, he rejoiced still more that the desire of all the Angels was soon to be fulfilled. We believe and we know, that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. We and all our race should ever think of her, and pray to her. In the trials and sorrows of our days, in the sinfulness of our hearts, in the bitterness of life, overshadowed by the certain approach of death. we should look to her, and draw near to her with true sorrow for sin.

We have called her the tree of life. To taste the fruit of the tree, we must first part its branches, and stretch out our hands through the leaves. The tree of life is Mary, the sweet fruit of this tree, Christ her Son. We reach through the branches to pluck the fruit when we greet Mary, as Gabriel did, with great love. She offers us her sweet fruit to taste when she sees our hearts no longer in sin, but willing in all things the will of God. Her intercession and prayer help us to receive the most holy Body of Christ, consecrated for us by the hands of men. This is the Food of true Life, the bread of Angels, and the nourishment of sinful men.

We, though we are sinful and sinning - we are the desire of Christ. His own blood has redeemed us, and he has destined us for heaven, to increase there the numbers of his loved ones. With wise thought, therefore, and with care, with all reverence and love, take him and eat. Let Christ fulfil in you this desire of his heart.

May the wondrous intercession of the Virgin whose name is Mary win for you this joy from her Son, Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, God for ever. Amen.

Book 12 "Four Prayers"

Proem

to the prayers written below, which were divinely revealed to the blessed Bridget of the kingdom of Sweden.

Since blessed Bridget always petitioned and asked God to pour into her some acceptable manner of praying, it happened one day, while she was praying, that in a wonderful manner she was lifted up in spirit by an elevation of mind. And then were poured into her from God certain most beautiful prayers concerning the life and passion and praise of Christ and concerning the life, compassion, and praise of the most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Afterward she so kept them in memory that every day she would read them devoutly. Wherefore the Blessed Virgin Mary, on a later occasion appearing to her at prayer, said: "I merited for you those prayers. Therefore, when you read them devoutly, you shall be visited with the consolation of my Son."

In this prayer revealed by God to blessed Bridget, the glorious Virgin Mary is devoutly and beautifully praised for her holy conception and infancy, for all her virtuous acts and labors, for the great sorrows of her whole life, for her most holy death and assumption, etc.

Prayer 1

Blessed and revered may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, most holy Mother of God. You are, in truth, his best creation; and no one has ever loved him so intimately as you, O glorious Lady. Glory be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, Mother of God. That same angel by whom Christ

was announced to you announced you yourself to your own father and mother; and of their honest wedlock you were conceived and begotten.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In your most holy infancy, immediately after your weaning, you were borne by your parents to the temple of God and were, with other virgins, entrusted to the keeping of the devout high priest.

Praise be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. When you reached that age at which you understood that God was your Creator, you forthwith began to love him intimately above all things. Then too you most discreetly ordered your time, both day and night, by means of various offices and exercises in honor of God. Your sleep, too, and the food for your glorious body were so temperately regulated by you that you were always fit for God's service.

Infinite glory be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, who humbly vowed your virginity to God himself and therefore had no concern about who would betroth you, for you knew that he to whom you had first given your faith was more mighty and more good than all others combined.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. You were alone and ablaze with ardent love for God and - all your mind and all the strength of your powers being lifted up - you were, with ardor and diligence, contemplating the most high God to whom you had offered your virginity, when the angel was sent to you from God and, in greeting you, announced to you God's will. To him you replied most humbly, professing yourself God's handmaid; and then and there the Holy Spirit wonderfully filled you with all power and virtue. To you, God the Father sent his coeternal and coequal Son, who came into you then and, of your flesh and blood, took for himself a human body. Thus, at that blessed hour, the Son of God became, in you, your son, alive in his every limb and without loss of his divine majesty.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Of your own blessed body, the body of Christ had now been created; and in your womb, you felt

his body ever growing and moving even to the time of his glorious nativity. Before anyone else, you yourself touched him with your holy hands; you wrapped him in cloths; and, in accord with the prophet's oracle, you laid him in a manger. With exultant joy, in motherly fashion, you used the most sacred milk of your breasts to nurture him.

Glory be to you, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. While still dwelling in a contemptible house, i.e., the stable, you saw mighty kings coming to your Son from afar and humbly offering to him, with the greatest reverence, their royal guest-gifts. Afterward, with your own precious hands, you presented him in the temple; and, in your blessed heart, you diligently preserved all that you heard from him or saw during his infancy.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With your most holy offspring, you fled into Egypt; and afterward, in joy, you bore him back to Nazareth. During his physical growth, you saw him, your Son, humble and obedient to yourself and to Joseph. Blessed may you be, O Lady Virgin Mary. You saw your Son preaching, doing miracles, and choosing the apostles, who, being enlightened by his examples, his miracles, and his teachings, became witnesses of truth that your Jesus is also truly the Son of God: publishing to all nations that it was he who, through himself, had fulfilled the writings of the prophets when on behalf of the human race he had patiently endured a most hard death.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, who knew beforehand that your Son must be made captive. Later your blessed eyes with sorrow saw him bound and scourged and crowned with thorns and fixed naked to the cross with nails. You saw many despising him and calling him a traitor.

Honor be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In sorrow, you gazed at your Son as he spoke to you from the cross; and with your blessed ears, you dolefully heard him, in the agony of death, crying to the Father and commending his own soul into his hands.

Praise be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With bitter sorrow, you saw your Son hanging on the cross: from the top of his head to the soles of his

feet, all black and blue and marked with the red of his own blood, and so cruelly dead. You also gazed at the bitter sight of the holes - in his feet, in his hands, and even in his glorious side. You gazed at his skin, all lacerated without any mercy.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With tears in your eyes, you saw your Son taken down, wrapped in cloths, buried in a monument, and there guarded by soldiers.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. To the grave intensification of your heart's deep sorrow, you parted from the sepulchre of your Son and, all full of grief, were brought by his friends to the house of John. But there, at once, you felt a relief of your great sorrow because you most surely foreknew that your Son would quickly rise.

Rejoice, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary, for in the same instant that your Son arose from death he willed to make this same fact known to you, his most Blessed Mother. Then and there he appeared to you by himself, and later he showed to other persons that he was the one who had been raised from death after having endured death in his own living body.

Rejoice therefore, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary. When death had been conquered and death's instigator had been overthrown, and heaven's entry had been opened wide through your Son, you saw him rising and triumphant with the crown of victory. And on the fortieth day after his resurrection, you saw him, in the sight of many, ascend with honor to his kingdom in heaven as himself a king accompanied by angels.

Exult, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary. You merited to see how, after his ascension, your Son suddenly transmitted to his apostles and disciples the Holy Spirit with which he had previously filled you to the full. By increasing the fervor of their charity and the rightness of their Catholic belief, he wonderfully enlightened their hearts.

Rejoice still more, my Lady, O Virgin Mary; and at your joy, let all the world rejoice. For many years after his ascension your Son permitted you to remain in this world for the consolation of his friends and for the

strengthening of the faith, for the relief of the poor and for the sound counseling of the apostles. Then, through your prudent words, your seemly behavior, and your virtuous deeds, your Son converted countless Jews and infidel pagans to the Catholic faith; and by wondrously illuminating them, he enlightened them to confess that you are a virgin-mother and that he, your Son, is God with a true human nature.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In your ardent charity and maternal love, you unceasingly desired at every moment to come to your so well-loved Son now sitting in heaven. While dwelling in this world and sighing after the things of heaven, you humbly conformed to the will of God; wherefore, by the dictates of divine justice, you ineffably increased your eternal glory. To you, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, be eternal honor and glory. When it pleased God to rescue you from the exile of this world and to honor your soul in his kingdom forever, he then deigned to announce this to you through his angel; and he willed that your venerable body, when dead, be entombed by his apostles in a sepulchre with all reverence.

Be glad, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For in that most light death of yours, your soul was embraced by the power of God; and he, as a watchful father, protected it from all adversity. Then it was that God the Father subjected to your power all things created. With honor, God the Son placed you, his most worthy Mother, beside himself on a most lofty seat. And the Holy Spirit, in bringing you to his glorious kingdom as a virgin betrothed to himself, did wonderfully exalt you.

Rejoice eternally, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For some days after your death, your body lay entombed in its sepulchre until, with honor and through the power of God, it stood linked anew to your soul. Exult to the full, O Mother of God, O glorious Lady, O Virgin Mary. You merited to see your body revived after your death and assumed with your soul into heaven amidst honor from the angels. You acknowledged that your glorious Son was God with a human nature; and with exultant joy, you saw that he is the most just judge of all and the rewarder of good works.

Rejoice again, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For your body's most holy flesh knows that it now exists in heaven as both virgin and mother. It sees itself in no way stained by any mortal or venial crime. No, it knows that it did all the works of virtue with such charity that God, in justice, had to revere it with highest honor. Your flesh then understood that the more ardently that anyone loves God in this world, the nearer to himself will God place that person in heaven. For it was manifestly clear to the whole court of heaven that no angel and no human loved God with such charity as you did; and therefore it was right and just that with honor God himself placed you, body and soul, on the highest seat of glory.

Blessed may you be, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Every faithful creature praises the Holy Trinity for you because you are the Trinity's most worthy creature. For wretched souls you obtain prompt pardon, and for all sinners you stand forth as a most faithful advocate and proxy. Praised therefore be God, the most high Emperor and Lord, who created you for such great honor that you yourself became both Empress and Lady everlastingly in the kingdom of heaven, forever to reign with him unto ages of ages. Amen.

This prayer was revealed by God to blessed Bridget. In it, by means of a painstakingly detailed narrative, Christ is beautifully and devoutly praised for his glorious incarnation; for all the actions, labors, and sorrows of his life and of his holy death; for his ascension into heaven; for the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples; etc.

Prayer 2

Blessed may you be, my Lord, my God, and my Love most beloved of my soul: O you who are one God in three Persons. Glory and praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. You were sent by the Father into the body of a virgin; and yet you ever remain with the Father in heaven, while the Father, in his divinity, inseparably remained with you in your human nature in this world.

Honor and glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. After having been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, you physically grew in the Virgin's womb; and in it you humbly dwelt until the time of your birth. After your delightful nativity, you deigned to be touched by the most clean hands of your Mother, to be wrapped in cloths, and to be laid in a manger.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You willed that your immaculate flesh be circumcised and that you be called Jesus. You willed to be offered by your Mother in the temple. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You had yourself baptized in the Jordan by your servant John. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. With your blessed mouth, you preached to human beings the words of life; and in the sight, through yourself, within your actual presence, you worked many miracles. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. By fulfilling the writings of the prophets, you manifested to the world in a rational way that you are the true God.

Blessing and glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. For forty days, you wonderfully fasted in the desert. You permitted yourself to be tempted by your enemy, the devil, whom - when it so pleased you - you drove from yourself with a single word. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You foretold your death ahead of time. At the last supper, of material bread you wonderfully consecrated your precious Body and charitably bestowed it on your apostles in memory of your most worthy passion. By washing their feet with your own precious and holy hands, you humbly showed your very great humility.

Honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. In fear of suffering and death, you gave forth from your innocent body blood in place of sweat. Nonetheless, you accomplished for us the redemption that you had willed to perform; and thus you manifestly showed the charity that you had toward the human race.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. Sold by your disciple and bought by the Jews, you were made a captive for our sake. Solely by your

word, you cast your enemies to the earth; and then of your own will you gave yourself over as a captive to their unclean and grasping hands.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You were led to Caiaphas, and you, who are the Judge of all, humbly permitted yourself to be given over to the judgment of Pilate. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. From Pilate the judge, you were sent to Herod; and you permitted yourself to be mocked and scorned by him; and you consented again to be remitted to that same Pilate as judge.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for the derision that you endured while you stood invested with purple and crowned with the sharpest thorns. With great patience you endured the spitting on your glorious face, the veiling of your eyes, and, on your cheek and neck, the grave and cutting blows of the deadly hands of the wicked.

Praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. Like an innocent lamb, you most patiently permitted yourself to be tied to the column and monstrously scourged; to be led, all bloody, to Pilate's judgment and there be gazed at.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. Most patiently, in Pilate's presence, with your own blessed ears you willed to hear abuse and lies hurled at you and the voices of the people asking that the guilty robber be acquitted and that you, the innocent, be condemned.

Honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. With your glorious body covered in gore, the judgment on you was the death of the cross. The cross you bore in pain on your sacred shoulders; and, amidst frenzy, you were led to the place of your passion. Despoiled of your garments, thus you willed to be fixed to the wood of the cross.

Glory unmeasured be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. For us you humbly endured that the Jews stretched out your venerable hands and feet with rope, that they cruelly fixed them with iron nails to the wood of the cross, that they called you a traitor, that in manifold ways they derided you

with unspeakable words while above you was inscribed that title of confusion.

Eternal praise and thanksgiving be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. With what great meekness you suffered for us such cruel sorrows! On the cross your blessed body was emptied of all its strength; your kindly eyes grew dark; as your blood decreased, a pallor covered all your comely face; your blessed tongue grew swollen, hot, and dry; your mouth dripped from the bitter drink; your hair and beard were filled with blood from the wounds of your most holy head; the bones of your hands, of your feet, and of all your precious body were dislocated from their sockets to your great and intense grief; the veins and nerves of all your blessed body were cruelly broken; you were so monstrously scourged and so injured with painful wounds that your most innocent flesh and skin were all intolerably lacerated. Thus afflicted and aggrieved, you, O my most sweet Lord, stood on the cross, and, with patience and humility, awaited in extreme pain the hour of your death.

Perpetual honor be to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Placed in this your anguish, with your kind and charitable eyes you humbly looked upon your most worthy Mother, who never sinned nor ever gave to the slightest sin any consent. While consoling her who was your own, you committed her to the faithful keeping of your disciple.

Eternal blessing be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. In the agony of death, you gave to all sinners the hope of forgiveness when, to the robber who had turned to you, you mercifully promised the glory of paradise. Eternal praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for each and every hour that you endured such great bitterness and anguish on the cross for us sinners. For the most acute pains proceeding from your wounds direly penetrated your happy soul and cruelly passed through your most sacred heart until your heart cracked and you happily sent forth your spirit, and, with bowed head, humbly commended it into the hands of God your Father. Then, having died in the body, you remained there all cold.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. By your precious blood and by your most sacred death, you redeemed souls and mercifully led them back from exile to eternal life. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You hung dead on the wood of the cross, and straightway you mightily liberated your friends from the prison of hell. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. For our salvation, you permitted your side and your heart to be perforated with a lance, and from that same side you sent forth, in a rich flow, water and your precious blood in order to redeem us. Before the judge's leave had been given, you willed that your most sacred body not be taken down from the cross.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. You willed that your blessed body be taken down from the cross by your friends and that it be laid in the hands of your most unhappy Mother. You permitted that it be wrapped in cloths by her and be buried in a monument and that it be guarded there by soldiers.

Sempiternal honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. On the third day, you rose from the dead, and you showed yourself alive to such others as it so pleased you. After forty days, while many watched, you ascended to the heavens; and there, in honor, you placed your friends whom you had delivered from Tartarus.

Jubilation and praise eternal be to you, Lord Jesus Christ. You sent the Holy Spirit to the hearts of your disciples; and in their spirits, you immeasurably increased divine love.

Blessed may you be, and praiseworthy and glorious unto the ages, my Lord Jesus. You sit upon the throne in your kingdom of heaven, in the glory of your divinity, corporeally alive, with all your most holy limbs that you took from the flesh of the Virgin. Even thus shall you come on the day of judgment to judge the souls of all the living and the dead: you, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen.

In this prayer, revealed by God to blessed Bridget, praise is given in a beautiful way to all the members of the most holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ and to his body's most virtuous actions.

Prayer 3

My Lord Jesus Christ, although I know well that your blessed body is unceasingly praised and glorified by the harmonious jubilee of the citizens of heaven above, and yet, because I am bound by a debt to render to you infinite thanksgiving, therefore I, although a person unwise and unworthy, desire nevertheless with all my heart and with all my mouth to offer to all the members of your precious body such thanks as I can and praise and honor.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you are truly the High Priest and Pontiff who first and before all others wondrously consecrated of material bread your true and blessed Body that you might satisfy us with the bread of angels. Therefore, may your glorious priestly seat at the right hand of God your Father, in your divinity, be happy and blessed unto eternity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you truly are the head of all men and angels, the worthy King of kings and Lord of lords; and you do all your works out of true and ineffable charity. You humbly permitted your blessed head to be crowned with a crown of thorns. Blessed, therefore, be your head and hair; and may they be gloriously adorned with an imperial diadem. May heaven and earth and sea and all things created be subject and obedient to your empire and your power unto eternity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your splendid forehead never turned away from right justice and truth. Blessed, therefore, be that same forehead of yours, and, with royal and triumphant glory, may it be perpetually praised by all creatures together. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your bright eyes of pity you look kindly upon all who with true charity ask of you grace and mercy. Blessed,

therefore, be your eyes, your eyelids, and your glorious eyebrows; and may all your fair and lovely sight be unceasingly glorified by the whole heavenly army of citizens on high. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your kindly ears you gladly hear and hearken to all who humbly address you. Blessed, therefore, be those ears of yours; and may they be eternally filled with all honor. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your most sweet and blessed nostrils did not shrink from the stench of the putrid cadaver of the dead Lazarus or even from the horrid smell that spiritually proceeded from the traitor Judas when he kissed you. Blessed, therefore, be your precious nostrils; and may all expend on them the odor of sweetness and praise forever. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, for our bodily and spiritual health and salvation and for our instruction in faith, you, with your own blessed mouth and lips, very often preached the words of life and of doctrine. Blessed, therefore, be your venerable mouth and your lips for every word that proceeded from them. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your most clean teeth, you most moderately chewed physical food for the sustenance of your blessed body. Blessed, therefore, and honored be your teeth by all your creatures. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your tongue never moved to speak and never kept silence, except with justice and utility and to the extent that such action had been foreordained in your divinity. Blessed, therefore, be that same tongue of yours. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with your age, you fittingly wore a fine beard on your handsome face. May your venerable beard, therefore, be everlastingly revered and adored. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your throat, your stomach, and your viscera; and may all your sacred inwards be perpetually honored for the fact that they decently nourished your precious body in due order and

perfectly sustained your bodily life for the redemption of souls and to the joy of the angels. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you are worthily called a leader by all because you bore on your holy shoulders and neck the burdensome bulk of the cross before you mightily shattered the gates of hell and led the souls of the elect back to heaven. Therefore, to your blessed neck and shoulders that so endured, be honor and glory eternally without end. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your blessed, royal, and magnificent heart could never, by torments or terrors or blandishments, be swayed from the defense of your kingdom of truth and justice. You did not spare your most worthy blood in any way; but rather, with your magnificent heart, you faithfully strove for justice and the law and intrepidly preached to your friends and to your enemies the law's precepts and the counsels of perfection. By dying in battle to defend these things, you - and your holy followers with you - have obtained the victory. Therefore, it is right that your unconquered heart be ever magnified in heaven and on earth and be unceasingly praised with triumphal honor by all creatures and soldiers. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, the strenuous soldiers and faithful servants of this world gladly expose their own lives to death in war in order that their lords may enjoy safety of life; but you, O my good Lord, quickly hastened to the death of the cross in order that your servants might not miserably perish. Wherefore it is just that your glorious and intrepid breast be eternally adored by all your servants, whom you have thus delivered, and by all others and that it be humbly praised even by the angelic choirs. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your venerable hands and arms you surpassed the strength of Samson in a wonderful way as you patiently endured that they be fixed to the wood of the cross and thus, with violence, snatched your friends from hell. Therefore to these same limbs of yours, from all whom you have redeemed, may there be shown unceasing reverence, eternal praise, and everlasting glory. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, may your precious ribs and your back be blessed and honored unto eternity by all human beings who sweat over labors spiritual and earthly. For from your infancy even to your death, you labored unceasingly for our redemption; and with great pain and burdensomeness, you bore our sins on your back. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, supreme purity and true cleanness, may your most innocent loins be blessed and praised above all the angels' cleanness which is in heaven and above the purity of all who have preserved their chastity and virginity in the world; for the chastity and virginity of them all cannot be compared to your cleanness and your purity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, may your knees, with their hams and your shins, be revered and humbly honored by all creatures in heaven and on earth above all who show reverence and honor by kneeling in the presence of their lords and masters; for you, the Lord of all, in all humility knelt before your own disciples. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, good Teacher, may your most blessed feet be blessed and perennially adored; for, in this world, to your great sorrow, you walked with unshod feet along the harsher way that you taught to others, and at the end, for our sake, you permitted them to be fixed with hard nails to the cross - you who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit through all ages of ages. Amen.

In this prayer, which was divinely revealed to blessed Bridget, most devout and beautiful praise is given to all the members of the glorious body of the Virgin Mary and to all her body's virtuous actions.

Prayer 4

O my Lady, my life, O Queen of heaven, O Mother of God, although I am certain that your glorious body is unceasingly praised in heaven with

melodious jubilee by all the heavenly court, still I, although an unworthy person, desire with all my heart to render here on earth such praise and thanks as I can to all your precious limbs.

Therefore, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, praised be your hair with all its strands, now decorated with a diadem of glory; for your hair is brighter than the radiance of the sun. Just as the hairs of the head cannot be computed, even so are your virtues innumerable.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may your forehead and your most honest face be together praised above the whiteness of the moon, for none of the faithful in this dark world ever looked to you without feeling some spiritual consolation poured into himself at the sight of you. Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Your eyebrows and your eyelids exceed in the brightness of their splendor the rays of the sun. Blessed be your most chaste eyes, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. They coveted none of the transitory things that they saw in this world. As often as you lifted up your eyes, their appearance excelled the splendor of the stars in the sight of the whole heavenly court.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may both your most blessed cheeks be praised above the beauty of the dawn, which so beautifully rises with its colors white and red. Even thus, while you were in the world, did your lovely cheeks shine with bright splendor in the sight of God and the angels because you never displayed them for worldly pomp or vanity.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, revered and honored be your most honest ears above all the forces of the sea and above the motion of all the waters; for your ears ever manfully militated against all the unclean flux of worldly hearing. O Virgin Mary, my Mistress, may your most sweet nose glory! By the power of the Holy Spirit, it never drew or sent forth a breath without all your thought being ever in the presence of the most High. Although at times you slept, you never turned your will from him. Therefore, to that same nose of yours and to your most blessed nostrils be ever given an odor of sweetness, praise, and honor above the mingled odor

of all the spices and all the herbs that habitually send forth a delightful fragrance.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, praised be your tongue - so pleasing to God and to the angels - above all fruitful trees. Every word that your tongue uttered never harmed any person but always came forth to someone's advantage. Your tongue was very prudent, and all found it sweeter to hear than the sweetest fruit is sweet to taste. O my Queen and my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may your blessed mouth and your lips be praised above the loveliness of roses and all other flowers and especially for that your blessed and most humble word in which, with this same precious mouth of yours, you responded to God's angel when through you God willed to fulfill in the world his will, which he had foretold through the prophets. By virtue of that word, you diminished the power of the demons in hell and honorably restored the choirs of angels in heaven.

O Virgin Mary, my Lady and my consolation, may your neck, your shoulders, and your back be perpetually honored above the charm of all lilies, for you never bent these members of yours and never straightened them again, except for some useful purpose or for the honor of God. Just as the lily moves and bends at the blowing of the winds, so all your members moved at the infusion of the Holy Spirit. O my Lady, my strength and my sweetness, may your most holy arms, your hands, and your fingers be blessed and eternally honored above all precious gems, which are comparable to your virtuous works. Just as your virtuous works allured the Son of God to you, even so did your arms and hands sweetly bind him in a maternal embrace of love.

O my Lady and my enlightenment, blessed be your most sacred breasts above all the sweetest springs of healing waters. Just as their welling water supplies solace and refreshment for the thirsty, your sacred breasts, in giving milk to the Son of God, supplied us in our need with medicine and consolation.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, blessed be your most precious bosom above the purest gold. When you stood all sorrowful beneath the cross of

your Son, then - at the sound of the hammers - you felt your glorious bosom most sharply constricted as if in a hard press. Although you heartily loved your Son, you nevertheless preferred him to endure that most bitter punishment in order that he might die for the redemption of souls, rather than that he avoid this death to their loss. Thus too did you stand most firm in the virtue of constancy when in every adversity you totally conformed yourself to the divine will.

O my Lady, O joy of my heart, O Virgin Mary, may your most venerable heart be glorified and revered. It was so afire for the honor of God - more so than all other creatures of heaven and earth - that the flame of its charity ascended the heights of heaven to God the Father, and, because of this, God's Son descended from the Father into your glorious womb with the fervor of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the Son was not separated from the Father even though, in accordance with the Father's foreordainment, he was most honestly made human in your virginal womb.

O my Lady, most fertile and most virginal Virgin Mary, blessed be your most blessed womb above all fruitfully sprouting fields. Just as the seed that has fallen upon good ground brings forth for its owner fruit a hundredfold, even so your womb, a virgin-womb and yet most fertile, brought forth for God the Father blessed fruit, more than a thousandfold. Just as the lord of a field glories in its fertile abundance of fruit and just as the little birds and the animals feed in it with delight, even so did the blessed and fertile fruit of the little field of your womb cause high honor for God in heaven, rejoicing for the angels, and, for humans on earth, a lavish flow of sustenance and life.

O my Lady, Virgin most prudent, may your most sacred feet be eternally praised above all roots that unceasingly bear fruit. May your feet be thus blessed because they carried the glorious Son of God enclosed in your body as its sweetest fruit while your body itself was inviolate and your virginity remained uninjured forever. Oh with what honesty your most sacred feet went their way! Truly, at each of their prints, the King of heaven stood consoled and all the court of heaven rejoiced and was very glad.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, O Mother of all, may God the Father, together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, be eternally praised in his incomprehensible majesty for that most sacred cell of your whole body in which God's Son so sweetly rested - he whom the whole army of angels praises in heaven and whom the whole Church reverently adores on earth.

And you, my Lord, my King, and my God, to you be perpetual honor, perennial praise, blessing, and glory, and infinite thanksgiving. For you created this Virgin so worthy and so honest; and you chose her for yourself as your Mother for the sake of all who in any way have been consoled in heaven and on earth and for the sake of those in purgatory who have had, through her, assistance and solace. You live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

The Life of Saint Bridget by Prior Peter and Master Peter

One should know that this most humble handmaid of God never presumed to call herself or to have herself called the bride of Christ, or his channel, because of vainglory or transitory honor or any temporal advantage, but at the instruction of Christ and of blessed Mary, his most worthy Mother, who both called her so. And it was not from presumption, but out of humble obedience to them, that she thus called herself in her writings.

Of what parents Christ's bride, Lady Bridget, was born.

As we read about blessed John the Baptist and about Saint Nicholas, the merits of parents many times cooperate to produce in their children an even greater grace, which perseveres to the end. So Lady Bridget of holy memory, the princess of Närke in the kingdom of Sweden, the bride of Christ, came forth from just and devout parents, who were noble according to the flesh because they were of the noble race of the kings of the Goths, but more noble according to God. For her father was a devout and just man and was called Lord Birger of Upper Sweden. Every Friday, he humbly confessed his sins; and he used to say this: "On Fridays, I want to prepare myself so well for God that on the other days I may be ready to bear whatever God may give."

He also visited, with great labor, the places of the saints - namely, of James and of others - imitating the footsteps of his predecessors. For his father had been a Jerusalem pilgrim and so had his grandfather and his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather. And it is unheard of that men so magnificent and of such great wealth and glory from the ends of the world - namely, from the kingdom of Sweden - should undertake such a laborious journey - namely, to see the places of Saint James and of Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ became incarnate and suffered.

Wherefore Christ later, among other words of the revelations, spoke to his aforesaid bride: "I tell you," he said, "but not for your praise, that your generation has come forth from a lineage of holy kings. And they themselves earned, by their merits, that my divine grace be made manifest with you." And similarly the mother of this same bride of Christ - her name was Lady Ingeborg - was very noble and very devout.

Her father, named Lord Benedict, a man sprung of kingly seed, founded and endowed many churches and monasteries. The wife of this Benedict hid her devotion of mind and walked ways in accord with her noble rank and the customs of the nobility. One time when she and her household were passing through a certain monastery of nuns, she was looked down upon by a certain nun. And indeed this nun began, with force, to disparage this same grandmother of the said Lady Bridget and to murmur with the other nuns. And when, on the following night, the said nun had fallen asleep, a person of wonderful beauty appeared to her and said with angry countenance: "Why have you disparaged my handmaid by saying that she is haughty, which is not true? For from her offspring I shall cause a daughter to come forth, with whom I shall do my great deeds in the world; and I shall pour such great grace into her that all the nations will be astonished."

However, when the time came that this bride of Christ, Lady Bridget, was still in her mother's womb, it happened that her mother suffered shipwreck in an inlet of the sea. And when many of either sex had already drowned, a duke of the kingdom, Lord Eric, the king of Sweden's brother, who was there at the time, saw her in peril, and, by every means in his power, brought her alive to the shore. Then that very night, a person in shining garments stood by that same mother of Lady Bridget and said: "You have been saved for the sake of the good that you have in your womb. Therefore nourish it with the love of God because it is God who has given it to you."

How the birth of Christ's bride appeared to a priest.

And so, with the coming of the time at which the girl Bridget was born, a certain parish priest of a nearby church - a man of proven life and advanced age - while awake and praying, saw in the night a shining cloud, and, in the cloud, a virgin sitting with a book in her hand. To the wondering priest the same virgin said: "To Birger has been born a daughter whose wonderful voice will be heard throughout the world."

How she was as if tongueless for three years.

And so, as the girl Bridget advanced in age, she was as if tongueless for three years and did not have the use of speech. Her parents were in much doubt about this, believing that she was mute; but at the end of the third year, she so fully obtained the use of speech that she did not speak in the babbling manner of infants, but, contrary to what is natural at such an age, she sounded the words perfectly.

How Bridget's mother dies.

In the meantime her mother, a woman virtuous in all things, was growing infirm. Several days in advance, she foreknew and foretold her own passing; and when she was just about to go forth from her body and saw her husband and the others sorrowing, she said: "Why do you sorrow? It is enough to have lived this long. We must rejoice because I am now called to a mightier Lord." And having called her children, she blessed them all and fell asleep in the Lord.

How, while still a girl, she saw wonderful things.

And so, when the girl Bridget, the bride of Christ, had now attained the seventh year of her age, she once saw, while wide awake, an altar just opposite her bed and a certain lady in shining garments sitting above the

altar. The lady had a precious crown in her hand and said to her: "O Bridget, come!"

And hearing this, she arose from bed, running to the altar. The lady said to her: "Do you want to have this crown?" She nodded, and the said lady put the crown on her head so that Bridget then felt, as it were, the circle of the crown touching her head. But when she returned to bed, the vision disappeared; and yet she could never forget it.

How she saw Christ crucified.

Round about her tenth year, on a certain occasion she heard a sermon preached in church about the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The following night she saw, in a dream, Christ as if he had been crucified in that same hour, and he said to her: "In such a way was I wounded." And she thought that this had happened at that hour and answered in her sleep: "O Lord, who has done this to you?"

Jesus Christ answered: 'Those who scorn me and neglect my love: they have done this to me.' Then she came to herself; and from that day, she felt such affection for the passion of Christ that she could rarely recall the memory of it without tears.

How an unknown girl was seen sitting beside her.

Moreover, on a day in her twelfth year, she was intent upon some handiwork involving silk and gold in the company of other girls of her own age; and she felt much anxiety of soul because she could not do her work as she wished. Then her maternal aunt - a very devout and praiseworthy lady into whose keeping Bridget had come after her mother's death - walked into the house and saw an unknown maiden sitting beside Bridget and doing that same piece of work with her. And since, at her entrance, that unknown girl had disappeared, the aunt then asked Bridget who the girl was that had been working with her.

Bridget answered that she had seen no one. Her aunt, however, inspected the work and found that it was so finely done that anyone looking at it would be given to understand that it was not the work of a girl of such a tender age but was something divine. Therefore this lady herself used to hold it in regard among her relics as something from God.

How the aunt found Bridget praying at night.

One night, the aforesaid aunt secretly entered the bedroom of the maidens and found Bridget kneeling naked before her bed and praying with tears. The aunt, suspicious of maidenly levity, ordered someone to bring a switch. But when she had begun to extend the switch to strike Bridget, at once it broke into tiny pieces so that the said aunt, seeing this, wondered greatly and said: "What have you done, Bridget? Have the women taught you some fallacious prayers?" The maiden answered with tears: "No, my lady; but I arose from bed to praise him whose custom is ever to help me." And her aunt said: "Who is he?" To which the maiden said: "The Crucified One whom I saw." And because of this, from that day her aunt began to love and venerate her more fervently.

How she saw the devil.

Not long after, when Bridget was wide awake and playing with girls, she saw the devil, as it were, having a hundred hands and feet and most deformed in every way. Thoroughly terrified, she ran to her bed, where the devil appeared to her again and said to her: "I can do nothing unless the Crucified were to permit." Since the women had seen and were asking what it was that had befallen her and why she was so thoroughly terrified, she answered: "A certain heartache seized upon me." And those women asked nothing more of her. But after some years, her aunt came and heard from her the whole truth and instructed her to cover her visions in silence and to be of good hope and to love God intimately and to beware of all levity.

How she came to marriage and how she lived in her marriage.

In the meantime, Lady Bridget was betrothed to a rich young man, a noble and prudent knight who was called Lord Ulf of Ulvåsa, prince of Närke. Between them they had so very honorable a marriage that both spouses lived in virginity for one year, devoutly asking God that if they ought to come together he, the Creator of all, would from them create an offspring that would be at his service. She truly loved God and was most highly wary of herself so that no one might speak badly of her and that she might not give occasion for anyone to disparage her. Therefore she fled levities and places or persons for which she could be branded; and she had in her company honest handmaids and well-mannered companions. Indeed, together with the members of her household, she was intent upon work for divine worship or for the welfare of her neighbors.

How she prayed and how a prayer was poured into her.

In truth, the bride of Christ was so very fervent in prayer and tears that when her husband was away, she passed almost whole nights in vigil and did not spare her body many genuflections and cruel disciplining. In fact, some time passed during which she constantly kept asking God in her prayers that some suitable manner of praying might be poured into her. One day, in a wonderful manner, she was elevated in mind; and then there was poured into her a most beautiful prayer concerning the passion of Christ and concerning the life and the praise of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. She kept this prayer in her memory so that afterward she might read it every day. And so one time when blessed Mary appeared to her afterward, she said: "I merited that prayer for you; therefore when you read it, you will be visited with the consolation of my Son."

About confession.

She continuously frequented confession; and for her confessor, she had a very expert and devout master of theology, called Master Matthias, who wrote an excellent gloss on the whole Bible and composed many volumes of books. And it was he who composed the prologue for the books of the Heavenly Revelations of the aforesaid Lady Bridget; and it was him that she obeyed in all her difficulties. wherefore, this same confessor used to say familiarly to his friends: "In Lady Bridget, it is a sign of some future grace that she so laments light matters as others lament things very serious and that she leaves nothing in her words or behavior unexamined."

About fasting.

When she could, she multiplied her great fasts and other acts of abstinence; and she very often abstained from delicacies in a hidden way so that it would not be noticed by her husband or by others.

About reading.

Indeed, when she was not occupied with manual labor, she was continually rereading the lives of the saints and the Bible, which she had caused to be written out for herself in her own language; and when she could hear the sermons of upright men, she did not spare herself the labor of going to hear those same sermons.

About almsdeeds.

Right up to her death, she did very large almsdeeds. In Sweden, she had a house set aside for the poor; and she served them in person when she could. She washed their feet and clothed them and visited them when they were infirm and handled their wounds and bodies with tender compassion and the greatest of maternal charity.

How blessed Mary helped her in childbirth.

Now at one time Lady Bridget was imperiled during childbirth, and her life was despaired of. That night, the women who were present to watch over her were awake; and as they looked, a person dressed in white silk was seen to enter and stand before the bed and handle each one of Lady Bridget's members as she lay there - to the fear of all the women who were present. When, however, that person had gone out, Lady Bridget gave birth so easily that it was a thing of wonder and not to be doubted that the Blessed Virgin, who gave birth without pain, was that person who mitigated the labors, the pains, and the peril of her handmaid, just as that same Virgin afterwards told her in a vision when she spoke this revelation:

A revelation.

"When you," she said, "had difficulty in childbirth, I, Mary, entered unto you. For that reason, you are an ingrate if you do not love me. Labor, therefore, that your children may also be my children."

How she virtuously educated and nurtured her children.

The bride of Christ, therefore, with great concern and diligence, virtuously educated and nurtured her sons and daughters, handing them over to teachers by whom they were instructed in discipline and good behavior. She wept daily over her children's sins, fearing that they would offend their God. And so one time when Saint John the Baptist appeared to her, he said: "Because you wept over the fact that your son offended me by not fasting on my vigil, and because you would prefer him to serve me rather than be a king, I shall therefore help him and shall arm him with my arms." Mention is made of this more clearly at the end of the fourth book of the Heavenly Revelations given to the aforesaid lady.

How she gained her husband for God and they both went to

Saint James.

When, however, Lady Bridget had for a long time been making progress in the virtues, she also gained her husband for God. For even though he was a vigorous man and an important member of the king of Sweden's council, he occupied himself - at his wife's advice and admonishment - in learning to read the Hours of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and the books containing the laws and legal judgments; and he studied to fulfill what belongs to justice and the law. And so, both of them - namely, this husband and wife - being fervent in their love for God and that they might more freely disengage themselves from the vanities of the world, went forth from their fatherland and from their kindred after Abraham's example, and, with great labors and expenses, proceeded into Spain to Saint James in Compostella.

After they had made their pilgrimage to many places of the saints and while they were on the way back, her husband took sick in the city that is called Arras, near Flanders. As the sickness grew worse, the bride of Christ, being in a state of great anxiety of soul, merited to be consoled by Saint Denis, who appeared and spoke to her at prayer: "I," he said, "am Denis, who came from Rome to these parts of France to proclaim God's word in my life. And so, because you love me with special devotion, I therefore proclaim to you that through you, God wills to be made known to the world and that you have been handed over to my guardianship and protection. Wherefore I shall help you always; and I give to you this sign: your husband will not die now of this sickness." And many other times, this same blessed Denis visited her in revelations and consoled her.

A vision of future things.

After some days, there in that same city of Arras, she again saw certain wonderful things in prophetic vision: namely, how she was going to travel to Rome and to the holy city of Jerusalem, and how she was going to depart from this world, and how a very handsome youth led her then in

spirit through all the said places. All these things were thus fulfilled after much time.

How, with her husband convalescing, she returned to her fatherland.

However, after his long illness, her husband was convalescing; and they both returned to their fatherland. Between them, they maintained a mutual continence and decided to enter a monastery. And after all their affairs and goods had been set in order to this end, her husband - still having the same purpose - died in the year of our Lord, 1344.

How she was sent to a teacher and how, after her husband's death, she was visited by the Spirit.

After some days, when the bride of Christ was worried about the change in her status and its bearing on her service of God, and while she was praying about this in her chapel, then she was caught up in spirit; and while she was in ecstasy, she saw a bright cloud; and from the cloud, she heard a voice saying to her: "Woman, hear me." And thoroughly terrified, fearing that it was an illusion, she fled to her chamber; and at once she confessed and then received the Body of Christ.

When at last, after several days, she was at prayer in the same chapel, again that bright cloud appeared to her; and from the cloud, she heard again a voice uttering words like those before, namely: "Woman, hear me." And then that lady, again thoroughly terrified, fled to her chamber; and having confessed, she communicated as before, fearing that the voice was an illusion.

Finally, after several days, when she was praying again in the same place, she was indeed caught up in spirit and again saw the bright cloud, and, in it, the likeness of a human being, who said this: "Woman, hear me; I am your God, who wish to speak with you." Terrified, therefore, and

thinking it was an illusion, she heard again: "Fear not," he said; "for I am the Creator of all, and not a deceiver. For I do not speak to you for your sake alone, but for the sake of the salvation of others.

Hear the things that I speak; and go to Master Matthias, your confessor, who has experience in discerning the two types of spirit. Say to him on my behalf what I now say to you: you shall be my bride and my channel, and you shall hear and see spiritual things, and my Spirit shall remain with you even to your death." After this, he added: "For three reasons, Lucifer fell," etc., as is more fully contained in the revelations of the Heavenly Book.

And this is the first revelation in the prologue, etc. Therefore in the year of our Lord 1345, the first divine revelations were made to Lady Bridget not in sleep but while she was awake and at prayer, with her body remaining alive in its vigor, but while she was caught up from her bodily senses in ecstasy and in visions, either spiritual or imaginary, with the coming of a vision or a supernatural and divine illumination of her intellect, for she saw and heard spiritual things and felt them in spirit. Indeed, in the manner mentioned, she saw and heard corporeal images and similitudes; in fact, in her heart she felt something, as it were, alive, which moved more actively and more fervently in response to greater inflammations and infusions, but less when the infusions were less. Many times, indeed, the movement in her heart was so vehement that motion could be seen and felt even on the outside.

How, even before her husband's passing, she saw certain things.

In the fourth year before her husband's passing, a saint of our land of Sweden, Botvid by name, appeared to her, as it were, in an ecstasy of mind, and said: "I have, with other saints, merited for you God's grace - namely, to hear and to see and to feel spiritual things - and the Spirit of God will inflame your soul."

In the third year before her husband's passing, the most Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her and said: "I am the Queen of those in misery. I want to show you what my Son was like in his humanity and what he was like when he suffered on the cross. And this will be a sign to you, that you will come to the places in Jerusalem where I lived in the body and there, with your spiritual eyes, you will see my Son." After twenty-eight years, all of this was thus accomplished, as it is more clearly recorded in the book of revelations that she had in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem.

How, at the beginning of the revelations, she was instructed to stay in a certain monastery.

And so at the beginning of the revelations, she was at once instructed to obey that same Matthias, a master of theology, and to stay in a monastery of Cistercian monks, namely, Saint Mary's in Alvastra, which is in Sweden, in the diocese of Linköping. The Spirit said to her in a vision: "If it should please the mighty Lord to do a work that is singular, general works must not therefore be despised but must be loved all the more and with greater fervor. So I, the God of all, who am above all rules, permit you to reside at the present time near the monastery - not to abolish the Rule, nor to introduce a new custom, but rather to display my wonderful work in a holy place. For David, in a time of need, ate the hallowed loaves - an act that is nevertheless forbidden to some in a normal time."

There was a lay brother with the name Gerekin in this same monastery of the Cistercian order at Alvastra. For forty years he never went outside the monastery; but day and night, he was absorbed in prayers; and he had this grace: that, during prayer, he almost continually saw the nine choirs of angels; and at the elevation of the Body of Christ, he merited frequently to see Christ in the appearance of a child. When Lady Bridget had come to the monastery and was residing there, this brother wondered in his heart and said:

"Why does that lady settle here in a monastery of monks, introducing a new custom against our Rule?" Then this same brother was caught up in an ecstasy of mind and clearly heard a voice saying to him: "Do not

wonder. This woman is a friend of God; and she has come in order that at the foot of this mountain she may gather flowers from which all people, even overseas and beyond the world's ends, shall receive medicine.”

Again, on a second occasion, this same brother saw her raised from the earth, and, as it were, lightning going forth from her mouth. And then he heard in spirit: ”This is the woman who, coming from the ends of the earth, shall give countless nations wisdom to drink. And this will be a sign to you: that she, from the mouth of God, is going to tell you the end of your life. And you will exult at her words and at her coming; and your desire will be fulfilled more quickly lest you see the evils that God is going to bring down upon this house.”

Lord Hemming, bishop of Åbo, performed her divine embassy in France and England and saw that the kings were less than willing to receive the words of God - namely, those revelations touching the kings and the war between the kingdoms of France and England. These revelations are contained in the fourth book of the Heavenly Revelations, nearly at the end of the chapter ”Disturbed in heart,” etc. As he slept, Lady Bridget appeared to him and said: ”Why are you disturbed? You will return to your fatherland successfully, and you will bear the fruit of souls. But know that the plague upon those to whom you were sent shall not yet end, for their hearts are hardened against God, and they shall be troubled yet a while until they are humbled.”

There was a nun named Katharine in the monastery of Mount Saint Mary, in the kingdom of Sweden. She received this grace: blessed Mary appeared to her, and, among other words, said: ”I shall show to you that I am the Mother of God, and I shall present you to my Son.” When this lady had seen Lady Bridget and they were talking together familiarly, she replied: ”O you happy lady! For I am not speaking so that either you or I would be boasting, because I have heard for very certain a voice that said this: 'Know that Bridget shall yet be called happy because, if she is scorned on earth, she will be honored in heaven and those to be born will proclaim her name.' Therefore stand firm because without doubt it will thus be accomplished, even as I have heard.”

When Master Matthias, her confessor - of whom mention was made above - was stricken with a certain temptation, it was said to Lady Bridget in spirit: "He will be knowledgeable from 'In the beginning,' i.e., from the beginning of the Bible and of the book of Genesis, which thus commences: 'In the beginning, God created heaven and earth,' right through to 'Alpha and O,' i.e., right through to the Apocalypse, where 'Alpha and O' is thus written. And he will be liberated from his temptations, and I shall give to him the fervor of my Spirit." And at once he felt himself liberated and given rest from his temptation. Also, on the same day that this Master Matthias died in his fatherland, Lady Bridget, who was staying in Rome, heard in spirit: "Happy are you, Master Matthias, because of the crown that was fashioned for you in Sweden. Come now to wisdom that will never end!"

When, in old age, Brother Algot of the Order of Preachers, a master of theology and a most familiar friend of Lady Bridget, for three years experienced blindness and suffered violently from calculi, he asked the said Lady Bridget to offer prayer to God for him. When, in compliance with his request, she asked for him to be healed, this answer came to her in spirit: "He is a gleaming star. It is not expedient that his soul be blackened by his body's health. Now he has competed and he has reached the finish. Nothing remains save that he be crowned. This will be a sign to him: now, from this hour, the pains of his flesh will be alleviated; now all of his soul will be inflamed with my charity." And not many days afterward, he expired.

The aforementioned Lady Bridget also had, from God, these special graces of great virtue and wonder: the first is that when she was saying anything that would be an offense to God, at once she felt in her mouth a very great bitterness, as it were, of sulphur. And by this she knew at once that she had offended God; and, bringing that word back into her memory, at once and without delay she confessed it to her confessor with great sorrow and tears. Also, when anyone spoke to her any sly or vicious words that would offend God, at once she felt in her nostrils a horrible stench of sulphur, which she could hardly tolerate. And this was a sign that God had

then been offended by the words of that person - a thing that we proved almost an infinite number of times.

Moreover, when any person asked her about some doubt in his conscience and sought from her advice and a special remedy that would be very good, she then used to answer him: "Pray to God about this. And we too shall think, and we shall do what we can for you - although I am an unworthy sinner." In fact, after three days or so and sometimes on the very same day, she would answer that same person - if the person were spiritual and honest - having first lifted her hands toward heaven and saying this: "I am a sinner unworthy to say such things; nevertheless, know that Jesus Christ appeared to me at prayer and told me what reply I might make to the fact that you asked such and such, etc."

And then she gave him the words that she had had from Christ or from the Blessed Virgin Mary as the response to this matter. Or else when she was well, she wrote down with her own hand and in her mother tongue the words divinely given to her; and she had them most faithfully translated into the Latin tongue by us, her confessors. And afterward, she listened to the translation together with her own writing that she herself had written, so that there might be not one word more added there or missing but only what she herself had divinely heard and seen in the vision.

If, in fact, she was ill, she called her confessor and her writer - a secretary specially assigned to this - and then, with great devotion and fear of God and sometimes with tears, she reported to him those words in her own vernacular and with a certain attentive elevation of mind, as if she were reading them in a book. And then the confessor said these words in the Latin tongue for the writer, and he wrote them down right there in her presence. And afterward, when the words had been written out, she wanted to listen to them; and she listened very diligently and attentively. And so she gave or sent this writing to those who were making the inquiry. This has often - yes, very often - been proven in experience by the lady queen and the archbishop of Naples; also by the queen and the king and the princes and many others from the kingdom of Cyprus and from the

kingdom of Sicily; and by men, and by women too, from Italy, from Sweden, and even from Spain.

Moreover, it also happened very often that to the same Lady Bridget were revealed the most secret thoughts and doubts of those who came to her and even of certain other persons who were absent - things that they themselves had never at all made public by word or by writing or by sign. Witnesses to this are: Lord Nicholas of Nola, rector of the Patrimony; Lord Gomez de Albornoz, rector of the duchy of Spoleto; the lord count of Fondi; and many others, both religious and secular, to whom she told or wrote the innermost things of their hearts.

One also had to wonder at another grace that the aforesaid lady had from her bridegroom, Jesus Christ. For very often it happened that with devotion and charity, various persons asked her to pray to God for certain souls of some of their departed. And if it seemed to her that they were in purgatory - a place where they would need intercessory prayers - they asked her to tell this to them, the living questioners, and to make known to them by what alms and sacrifices or by what intercessory prayers of the living the dead could be freed from those pains.

Indeed, she received in writing the names of the departed; and with utmost charity and compassion, she prayed to God for them. And then, in prayer, she obtained answers from God as to whether those souls were in purgatory - and even about the manner of that purgatory and of those pains where they were - or whether they were in hell or in heaven. She was also given to know, clearly and distinctly, the manners of intercessory prayer and of alms giving through which those souls could be freed.

Good proof of this was experienced by some of the aforesaid living persons who were named above and who devoutly asked her about such things, and, concerning this, had divine answers from her in writing. Indeed when she herself, or any of us in her house, was anxious or doubtful about anything, at once and without great delay, through the revelations divinely given to her, she humbly brought back from Christ,

her glorious bridegroom, or from our Lady, the Virgin Mary, a most precious answer explaining that business.

What more is there? For the testimony to so many virtues, to such great holiness and excellence, to such flowing and abundant grace divinely shining in her is all disclosed in the books of the Heavenly Revelations, which were divinely given to her, and in the Book of Questions, which was also given to her divinely, through an infusion from the Holy Spirit, in a wonderful manner and, as it were, in a single hour, while she was riding her horse and journeying to her villa in Vadstena, as is more fully recorded at the beginning of that same Book of Questions.

Testimony is also provided by visual experiences, for very often these things were seen by us ourselves and by many others in various parts of the world. For we have often seen that things that she had prophetically foretold many years ahead of time, afterwards actually came about in our experience. This is something that many others also saw and experienced. From them it may be clearly gathered (and it can be tested by the sayings of the saints) that she had from God the true spirit of prophecy and that intellectual vision had been divinely given to her.

The miracles too that since her death are happening through her merits and intercession bear now, and will in future bear, the clear witness of truth to the great graces that divinely sparkled in her. Indeed, after this lady had been called into the Spirit of God, she prophesied not only about the future - as did the prophets - but also about the present and the past; and she also clarified many things concerning certain doubtful matters in Sacred Scripture.

Moreover, like the apostles, she relinquished all that she owned; and, at God's instruction, she sent letters to the major personages of the whole of Christendom: namely, to the supreme pontiffs; to the emperors; to the kings and queens of France and of England, of Sicily and of Cyprus; to princes and princesses; to various prelates; to seculars and to religious; to kingdoms, and to lands and to cities. She also visited many lands

personally, showing God's will to great and small alike for the good of their souls, redeemed by Christ's blood.

Like the holy evangelists, she wrote also about the birth of Christ and about his glorious life, and, in a similar way, about his death and about his resurrection and about his eternal glory, as is shown clearly enough in her revelations.

In truth, she was not without experience of martyrdom; for she mortified her body by living in toil and abstinence, by exposing herself to dangers on land and on sea, and by patiently enduring, for the sake of Christ's name, the reproaches and affronts of many, whether she was in grave physical infirmity or in health. From her innermost heart, she continually returned thanks to her bridegroom, Jesus Christ, for all adversities; and she prayed suppliantly to God for those who offended her.

How a certain lady who had died appeared to her and foretold to her the future.

Now, during the first month that Lady Bridget came to the said monastery of Cistercian monks - namely, Saint Mary's of Alvastra - a certain lady, already dead and very well known to her, appeared to her at prayer and said: "To you shall be given understanding of spiritual things; in all things, therefore, humble yourself. And that you may know this with greater certainty, behold, I give to you a threefold sign.

The first is that I have been gravely purged for the stubbornness of my conscience. The second: that my husband, who is not my husband, now seeks something carnal - namely, carnal intercourse with another woman in opposition to God - and it will be, for him and his posterity, a cause of tribulation. The third is that you will cross the sea; and you will die in a glorious place, in Rome."

Moreover, the lady appeared to her a second time and said: "I want to inform you of my situation; for it thus pleases God that as we have loved

each other while both living in the flesh, so we should now love each other in spirit. I - to speak using a similitude - have been put, as it were, in thick glass and can hear, but not yet reach, the things that I wish for. Thus, I can understand and desire and hope for those everlasting joys; but I have not yet attained to the full until the glass, by God's will, becomes more thin and sheer.

And this has been because two things weighed me down in the world: namely, a facility of anger; and the fact that I was not content with the things that I had, but wanted always to have more. Therefore induce those who were my friends to have chalices made for me, in which the sacrifice of my Lord Jesus Christ may be offered; and second, to have remembrance of me made during the year by those who are the friends of God. For by such means I shall, without a doubt, be more quickly freed from this punishment."

What sort of things happened during life to that aforesaid lady who was the sister of Lady Bridget's husband and who thus appeared to her.

That said lady who after death appeared to Lady Bridget was very famous for her fasts and prayers. And one time, when she was seriously ill, the devil appeared to her in a most hideous form, intending as if to snatch her as she lay there. In fact, violently terrified, she called out: "For eternity," she said, "I shall be damned!" As she many times repeated these words, her confessor spoke to her: "Why," he said, "do you speak these words, my Lady, when you have always loved God with all your heart?"

She, however, could make no answer save as before: "I shall be damned for eternity!" Finally, she fell silent in the hands of those who held her; in a wonderful way, her face began to change and to take on colors and to be, in color, now white and now a rosy red. While those present were wondering, she said in a loud voice: "Blessed are you, my God, who have created and have freed me. I confess you and I bless you."

But when she had regained her breath and was returning to herself, she called her confessor and other virtuous men and said to them: "I saw the devil in a most vile form. Taking fright at his appearance, I believed that I would be damned. And while I was in this terrible anxiety, I saw Christ, as it were, standing on the cross. As the devil fled away, Christ said: 'When a year has rolled by, you will see the same vision, but not the devil. And this will be a sign to you, when you see it, that at once your life will be at an end.' " And so it happened; for when the year had rolled by, on that very same date she saw Christ; and then her soul was loosed from the flesh after long purgation.

How this lady appeared a third time to Christ's bride, Lady Bridget.

This said lady also appeared a third time after her death to that same Lady Bridget and said: "What I longed for, I now have. My former torments have been consigned to oblivion, and my love is now perfect. But as for you: be obedient! For you are going to come into the society of the great."

How, after the death of her husband, Lady Bridget distributed her goods.

With her husband dead, at once Lady Bridget distributed all her goods among her children and the poor. She changed her way of living and dressing; and she would have done even greater things but for the obstacle of the fact that she had been instructed in a revelation to make a pilgrimage to Rome. And when she was scorned by the nobles for the sudden change and the cheapness of her clothing, she answered: "It is neither for you that I start, nor for you that I stop. For I have determined in my heart to tolerate injurious words. Pray, therefore, for me that I may be able to persevere."

How she was divinely instructed to go to the king of Sweden.

And so, when she had been instructed in spirit to go to the king of Sweden, and when she pleaded the excuse that she did not know what to say to him, this answer was made to her by God: "When you arrive," he said, "open your mouth; and I will fill it." Therefore, when she arrived, divine words were at once poured into her - not only words that pertained to the king, but also many that were about the future.

How she was sent to a bishop and he acknowledged her coming.

This same Lady Bridget also came to a certain bishop of proven life and devotion and said to him some words divinely revealed to her. When he heard those words, he, in his own conscience, discovered - right down to the last point - what she herself had understood in spirit: namely, things that, except for God and himself, no human at all had ever known. For the said lord bishop had certain less rational desires, and, in some things, a zeal at variance with knowledge; and he practiced fasts that went beyond nature. Therefore, he more willingly accepted her charitable admonitions, corrected everything by the standard of charity, and spoke to her: "Last night," he said, "I definitely saw you entering toward me and removing from my heart very great burdens. Therefore, not only do I believe your words, but I also see in my soul that God is doing wonderful things with you."

How she prohibited the king from imposing unjust imposts and tributes.

When the king of Sweden was hard pressed to pay a certain sum of money and was arranging to put the burden on the community of the realm contrary to the statutes and his oaths, Lady Bridget replied to him: "My Lord, do not do this; for you will not be immune from the wrath of God. But take instead my two sons; and pawn them as hostages until you can pay; and do not offend your God." Then, on that very day, there came to

her the following vision in which Christ spoke to Lady Bridget and said this: "Just as a kingdom has sometimes been saved because of the charity of one human being, so some kingdoms have been lost because of one person's new inventions and burdensome taxes.

I give you an example of this in the case of the following kingdom. For its king himself trusted in money - exacted by fraud or feigned justice from his people and from travelers - more than he trusted in me. Therefore, he lost his life and left his kingdom in trouble.

Others who succeeded him turned his crooked inventions into custom, and, as it were, into law. But if a king trusts in me, his God, and the community of the realm is petitioned for assistance with charity, then I am able to save and to restore to peace more quickly because of that charity. Therefore, if the king desires to prosper, let him keep his promise to me and keep truth with the community of his realm; and let him especially beware of introducing new inventions or tributes or technicalities. In his difficulties, let him follow the advice of those who fear God, and not the advice of the covetous; for it is better to suffer some adversity in this world than to sin knowingly against me and against his own soul."

How the devil wanted to deceive her.

One day, when Lady Bridget was going, at the Spirit's instruction, to visit a certain man obsessed by the devil, the horse on which she was accustomed to ride, and which had previously been very gentle, suddenly so reared up from the ground that the horseshoes on its hooves could all be seen. As a result of this rearing, that same lady suffered pain in her back for a long time, whereby she was given to understand that the devil begrudged this sinner's conversion. In fact that man being visited - a man noble, by the world's standards, and great - was vexed by the devil; and especially in her presence, he was disturbed, as it were, more gravely than usual.

Then that same man spoke many horrible things against God and said to her: "Oh, how unlike are your spirit in you and my spirit in me! But when it pleases the Spirit who is in you, I shall be perfectly healed; for he himself, because of my disbelief and my hidden demerits, has given me over into the hands of a cruel exactor." She answered him: "I promise you that you shall be quickly healed, but I ask why you speak such great abominations against God." And he said: "I do not rule myself." When he had said this word, he began to speak, as it were, more bitterly against God and to blaspheme him, saying: "Him who created heaven and earth, I worship; about your new God Christ, be silent!" Then the bride of Christ said: "Be silent, wretched devil, in your speech against God; for even if you are this creature's punisher, nevertheless you shall not be his eternal owner." And at once that man, as if drowsing, fell silent; but after several days, he was cured.

Still another miracle took place. In a revelation, it had been divinely told to the aforementioned Lady Bridget that on God's behalf she should instruct a certain Brother Peter - the prior of the Cistercian order's monastery of Saint Mary of Alvastra in Sweden - to write the books of the revelations that had been divinely given to that same Lady Bridget in spiritual vision. This same prior was a very simple man; and he would for no reason set his hand to writing; for he reckoned himself, because of his ignorance, less than suitable for so great a work. Then he was driven by Christ with the fear of death - and almost died - until he consented. And when his consent was given, he was suddenly cured without any lapse or interval of time.

So too a demoniac in East Gothland. In the presence of two trustworthy witnesses, at words from the mouth of the aforesaid religious - words whose form this lady heard from Christ and which the brother said to the demon according to Christ's instruction - then indeed the demoniac was cleansed.

Moreover, another demoniac in Sweden was cleansed in the same manner by the same religious, in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, at the instruction of the aforesaid Lady Bridget.

Moreover, through the intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who with Christ appeared to the said Lady Bridget, a certain public prostitute was converted through the prayer of that same Lady Bridget. Moreover, many magnates in the kingdom of Sweden were converted when at one and the same time and place - with the exception of those ungrateful to Christ - they experienced a movement of their hearts for the better: a movement caused by him at the words of the same Lady Bridget and which they confessed had been sent by him.

How Lady Bridget was judged by a certain bishop in his heart, and what things came to her.

One time, at a banquet, when the bride of Christ was sitting at table with a certain devout bishop and, in God's honor, was making use of the delicacies that had been served, she was judged by the bishop interiorly in his mind; for he said in his heart: "Why does this lady of such great spirit not abstain from delicate foods?" Then, toward vespers, she herself, knowing nothing of such thoughts, heard these things in spirit: "Say to the bishop, 'I am he who filled the shepherd with my Spirit. Was this because of the shepherd's fasting? I am he who made married men prophets. What had they done to merit this? I commanded a prophet to take an adulteress as his wife. Did he not obey? I am he who spoke as well to Job in his delights as when he sat upon the dunghill.

Therefore, because I am wonderful, I do all things that please me without dependence on preceding merits.' " And so, hearing this, the bishop recognized himself and now humbled asked the same Lady Bridget to pray for him. And then, on the third day, the most Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to that same bride of Christ and said to her: "Say to that same bishop that because he is accustomed to begin all his sermons with praise of me and because his judgment was made with charity rather than envy, his charity thus merits consolation. Tell him, therefore, that I want to be a mother to him and that I want to present his soul to God. And now I shall expound to you how he is the seventh animal of the animals shown to you

and how he will carry my words into the presence of kings and pontiffs.” This revelation of the seven animals is more fully recorded in the book of the revelations.

How Lady Bridget returned from the king of Sweden and how her son died.

And so, when Lady Bridget returned from the king of Sweden to the monastery of Alvastra, she found that a son of hers - who, when she left, had long been infirm - was now in extremis. And she wept much over his long infirmity and reckoned that it was happening because of the sins of his parents. Then the devil appeared to her and said: "Why, woman, with all this water of tears, are you weakening your sight and laboring in vain? Could water ascend to heaven?" In the same hour, Christ appeared to his bride in his human form and said: "This boy's infirmity has not been caused by constellations of stars - as the foolish say - nor by his sins. He has become infirm because of his physical condition and so that his crown will be greater.

Therefore, if he has hitherto been called by his own name, Benedict, Ulf's son, from now on he shall be called the son of tears and prayers; and I shall put an end to his distress. In fact, on the fifth day afterward, there was heard a most sweet singing, as it were, of birds between the boy's bed and the wall; and, behold, then the boy's soul went forth; and the Holy Spirit said to that same Lady Bridget: "Behold what tears accomplish! Now the son of waters has passed over to his rest. Therefore the devil hates the tears of good people, which proceed from divine charity."

About a brother who lay in his infirmity for three years and more.

In the said monastery of Alvastra, a certain lay brother of holy life was infirm for three years and more. At Christ's command, his bride visited the brother and said to him: "Repent with greater attention because there is

something hidden in your heart. As long as you keep it hidden, you will not be able to die.” When he answered that he had nothing that had not been disclosed in penance, she said: ”Ask with what intention you entered the monastery and with what intention you have lived up to now.” Then he dissolved in tears and said: ”Blessed be God who has sent you to me. Now that you have spoken, I want to tell the truth; for I do have something hidden that I never dared to betray because, as often as I repented, my tongue was always, as it were, tied and indeed excessive shame invaded me so that I did not open the matter.

Therefore, as often as I made my confession, I invented for myself a new conclusion to my words, saying at the end: 'I declare to God and to all God's saints that I am culpable of all the crimes that I have told to you, Father, and of all those that I have not told.' I believed that through this conclusion, all was forgiven. But now, if it should please God, I would gladly tell the whole world.” And when a confessor had been called, he fully explained everything with tears; and he did not survive long afterward.

About a temptation to gluttony with which Lady Bridget was tempted.

Now at one time, Lady Bridget was so gravely tempted with gluttony that for hunger, she could scarcely think of anything else. Finally, in spirit, she saw an Ethiopian holding in his hand, as it were, a morsel of bread and a certain very handsome youth holding a gilded vessel. And the youth said: ”Why do you solicit that woman who has been given over into my custody?” The Ethiopian responded: ”Because she glories in an abstinence that she has not had; for she does not cease to fill her belly until it is full of delicate dung. I therefore hold forth my morsel that grosser things may, for her, become sweet.”

The youth responded: ”You know quite well that she does not have an immaterial nature as we do but, rather, a sack made of earth. Since earth is slippery and restless, she needs continual re-creation.” The Ethiopian said:

"Your Christ fasted, eating nothing; and the prophets ate bread and drank water in moderation. Therefore they merited lofty things.

And how will that woman merit when she always feels a satiety?" The youth responded: "Is Christ not yours too as well as ours?" To which the other said: "By no means at all! For I will never humble myself to him but will rather act in opposition to him because I shall not return to his glory!" The youth responded: "Our Christ taught us to fast, not so that the body would be weakened beyond measure, but so that it would be humbled and not grow insolent in opposition to its soul. Our Christ does not ask for things impossible to nature but for moderation; he does not ask the quality or the quantity of what one eats but, rather, the quality of the eater's intention and charity."

To which the Ethiopian said: "It is just that what that woman did not experience in youth, she should feel in old age." In rebuttal, the youth said: "The praiseworthy thing is abstinence from sin. There is no obstacle to heaven in purple dye or in delicate flesh when these things are possessed together with the love of God. Sometimes the customs of one's upbringing must be maintained well, with thanksgiving, lest the flesh be too seriously weakened." After this, at that same hour, the Virgin Mary appeared to her - wearing a crown - and said to the Ethiopian: "Be silent, you negotiator; look askance, because she has been assigned to me!" And the Ethiopian spoke: "If I cannot do anything else," he said, "I will cast a bramble of the Christ's-thorn plant onto the hem of her garments." To which the Virgin said: "I will help her. And as often as you cast it on, it shall be cast back into your face; and her crown will be doubled." Not long after this vision, the whole temptation to gluttony was taken away.

How she was tempted at prayer.

During her prayers, the bride of Christ was sometimes tempted even with unclean thoughts. Blessed Mary appeared to her and said: "The devil is like an envious spy, seeking to accuse and impede the good. Therefore try and pray as long as you are being tempted because your desire and

good effort will count for you as prayer; and if you cannot cast out of your mind the sordid matters that come to it, those efforts will count for you as merit provided that you not consent and as these things are against your will.”

How the prayer of the bride of God was of profit to someone.

A certain religious was tempted for twelve years concerning the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and concerning the name of blessed Mary, whom he could never name without sordid thought and blasphemy. And so for a long time he omitted even the Angelic Salutation. With tears, he asked Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, to pray for him; and, obtaining her prayers, he was so freed that, afterward, he rarely pronounced the name of blessed Mary without great joy; and the Body of Christ became so sweet to him that he could not rest on a day when he did not celebrate Mass.

For a long time, this same man had a desire to visit the holy places in Jerusalem; but, out of obedience and because of his profession, he was not permitted to do so. When he was in extremis, he was enraptured and saw all those places in spirit just as did those who have seen them in body; and when he had shown the arrangement of those places to those who had previously visited them, he passed away, exulting in the Lord.

How the bride of Christ was instructed to go to Rome and to testify to the grace of God.

However, after the passage of almost two years in the Cistercian order's aforesaid monastery of Saint Mary of Alvastra, Christ instructed her to go to Rome, even as it is recorded in the following revelation.

A revelation concerning the same thing.

Our Lord Jesus Christ once spoke to this same Bridget and said: "Go to Rome, where the streets are paved with gold and reddened with the blood of saints and where there is a compendium - i.e., a shorter way - to heaven because of the indulgences that the holy pontiffs have merited by their prayers. Moreover, you shall stay there in Rome until you see the supreme pontiff and the emperor there at the same time in Rome, and to them you shall announce my words."

What she did on the way to Rome.

After she had gone forth from her fatherland, she was divinely instructed in a vision to give up her customary reading and learn grammar. This was when she was given blessed Agnes for her solace and Master Peter, her confessor, for a teacher to instruct her and that she might obey him. Moreover, the said lady, in a brief time, made so much progress in grammatical knowledge that she knew in part how to read, to understand, and to utter Latin speech.

How she was divinely instructed to go to Naples and visit there the places of saints.

After she had stayed a long time in Rome, Christ spoke to her thus and said: "Permission is given you to visit the holy places in Sicily because in that place are the bodies of many who loved me with all their heart. Outstanding among them is Thomas, my apostle. When you arrive there, I am going to show you certain secrets." And since she hesitated somewhat lest her money for expenses chance to fail on the way, the Lord answered: "One who possesses a meadow does not spare the meadow in preference to his laboring horse. So I, the Lord, provide for my friends when their own providence fails; and I stir up the souls of others to do good to them." Look in the Book of Heavenly Revelations for a certain vision that was given to Lady Bridget by Christ in the city of Ortona and which speaks about the praise of blessed Thomas and about that kingdom.

How in Rome she was divinely instructed to go to Jerusalem although the instruction did not determine the time.

Christ once spoke to her and said: "I am like an eagle that foresees those flying in the air who want to harm its young and forestalls them by its own flight lest they do the harm; so I foresee the times and the ways and the ways' difficulties and the dispositions of souls. And so I say to you: sometimes, 'Stand and wait'; now, 'Go and hurry.' Therefore, because it is already the time, go now to the places previously shown to you: where there was a vessel, clean and not clean; and where there was a lamb, shorn and not shorn; where a lion roared and did not roar; where a serpent moved and did not move; where an eagle flew to a place from which it has never withdrawn."

See in the Book of Questions, in the last and the next-to-last chapters, where these things are recorded and divinely clarified. And when she complained of bodily infirmity and of decrepit age, then an answer came to her from Christ: "Who is the Establisher of nature? Is it not I? Therefore I will increase your strength. I will provide for the way. I will guide you and lead you back to this place in Rome."

On a certain occasion - fifteen years before the incident that we last mentioned above - when Lady Bridget was praying in Rome, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said: "Because of the exceeding love that you have for me, I tell you that you will go to Jerusalem when it pleases my Son; and then you will go also to Bethlehem; and I then will show to you how I gave birth to my Son, Jesus Christ." This promise the Virgin Mary fulfilled sixteen years later, when Lady Bridget was in these said places - as is more amply recorded in the books of revelations, in a certain revelation made to her in Bethlehem that speaks of the Virgin Mary's childbearing.

How she was divinely commanded, while she was in Jerusalem, to return again to Rome.

On a certain occasion, while Lady Bridget was praying in Jerusalem, Christ appeared to her and said: "All the places that other pilgrims visit, you too will visit. For there are still other places where I was in the body and which should be visited; but it is sufficient for you to seek out the nearer ones because of your infirmity and because it is not yet the time of that mercy of which mention has been made; for there are very few who reflect upon the charity of my passion and of my patience. But when you have come back from the Jordan, prepare yourselves for your journey; for there are still some things to be sent to the supreme princes of the earth." Look for the many and beautiful revelations that are contained in the Heavenly Book and which were made to that same Lady Bridget in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem.

About a special sign of the Spirit.

One should also know that from the first time that the bride of God was visited by the Spirit of God she had this sign: that, when she was approached by human beings full of diabolic spirit or who were averse to goodness, she felt so great a stench in her nostrils and so bitter a taste in her mouth that she could hardly bear it. Wherefore, when a certain man - who had undergone a change away from goodness and had returned to his earlier sins - had sat down with the bride of God and was speaking with her, he said to her: "What is this about a spirit that you are said to have? Is it from you or from someone else or from a demon?"

To this she - who scarcely had the strength to bear his stench - responded: "You have a fetid indweller, and fetid things proceed from your mouth. Repent, therefore, lest there come upon you the vengeance of God!" The man went away angry; and, when he had gone to sleep, he heard voices without number saying: "Let us drag the pig to the places for pigs because he has spurned the warnings of salvation." Returning to himself, he perfectly corrected his life; and his odor was perceived by the said lady to have changed into sweetness.

A similar thing, as it were, happened to the same Lady Bridget in Famagusta, in the kingdom of Cyprus, with a certain religious to whom she was speaking; and with many other people, this similarly happened to her.

Item concerning the same thing.

The bride of God had also this special trait: that, in the twenty-eight years from the time she began to have the Spirit of God, she never went or made any change to other cities nor ever tarried in any place except in accord with the infusion and instruction of the Holy Spirit.

About the city of Milan.

When she was in Milan, she stayed there a long time; and there, amidst other words, the Blessed Virgin Mary responded to the words of a certain great master of theology, as is recorded in the Book of Heavenly Revelations.

About Rome.

In truth, the said Lady Bridget stayed in Rome a rather long time, not only because of the indulgences but also because of the promises to be fulfilled. There, in manifold ways, she experienced visitations both concerning the state of the City and concerning the reparation of all states. There too, she was informed with certainty about many things in the future, as is shown in the revelations made to her, which are more amply recorded in her books. There also in Rome the promise was fulfilled that had been made to her in a revelation in Sweden many years before: namely, that she, would go to Rome and would stay there until she saw there the pope and the emperor.

Moreover, when the lord pope, Urban V, wanted to return from Italy to Avignon, the Virgin Mary appeared to the said Lady Bridget and said to her some words in a vision, saying that this same lord pope should not return from Rome, nor from Italy, to Avignon; otherwise, the outcome would be to his loss in a brief time - as is more amply recorded in that revelation which the same Lady Bridget, with her own hand, presented to that same lord pope in Montefiascone. And present there, on that occasion, was our lord pope, Gregory XI, who was then called Cardinal Beaufort.

Moreover there, on that occasion in Montefiascone, the Virgin Mary instructed her to tell, on her own behalf, a certain hermit-priest Alphonsus, a friend and acquaintance of hers, to write down and copy the books of the revelations that had been divinely given to her and which indeed until then had been kept secret. At the death of this same lady, Christ confirmed this by instructing the same Lady Bridget to tell her confessors to hand over to the said hermit all the secret revelations and all others that they had not yet handed over in order that this same hermit might have them written out and that he might publish them to the nations for the honor and glory of God.

Moreover, in Naples and in Jerusalem too, she stayed for a long time; and there she saw some visions concerning the state and the tribulation of kingdoms and concerning the nativity and the passion of Jesus Christ and concerning the calling of the nations. Wherefore, in Jerusalem, Christ spoke to her: "My words," he said, "must for a long time be heard and proclaimed; works and signs will come afterward.

Therefore, know that there are many not yet born who are going to receive my words sweetly. Wherefore, as it says in my gospel: 'Blessed are they who hear the words of God'; so I say now: 'Blessed are they who now hear my words and will perform them in deed.' Nevertheless, know that after your passing more will receive my words and will follow them with sweetness, for they are not like a flower that will fall but like a fruit that lasts for eternity." One should know also that although during her husband's life Lady Bridget had done some penance in a hidden way,

nevertheless after his death she was not content with this penance. Indeed, for thirty years she used no linen garments except the veils for her head.

Also, before her bed, she had them put on the pavement a coverlet and a little cushion for under her head; and thus she used to sleep there, having over her a single garment or a mantle. When questioned as to how she could rest there in the very intense cold that prevails in those parts of Sweden, she spoke in answer: "I feel," she said, "within myself so great a warmth from divine grace that the cold that is without does not much urge me toward a softer bed."

Day and night, however, she was accustomed to perform so many genuflections, bows, and prostrations that it was a wonder that so tender a person could endure such great labors.

It was her custom too, on Fridays, to pour on her bare flesh flaming drops from a burning candle so that they left wounds remaining; and if at any time before the next Friday these wounds healed somewhat by themselves, she then at once put her nails in and plowed them so that her body would not be without the suffering of wounds; and this she did for the sake of the memory of the passion of Christ. She also had knotty bands of cord with which she girded herself right against her flesh and which she never removed, day or night, whether she was ill or well.

When, however, she came to these parts of Rome and of Italy, she visited the holy places with devotion and great frequency; and with sufficiently great toil to herself, she observed the practice of not speaking voluntarily with anyone on the way unless she happened to have been asked a question - in which case she replied with very few words to the one speaking to her. And whenever she uttered any unconsidered word, then at once, on the cord that hung upon her breast for saying the paternoster, she diligently noted that word by which she had offended God, in order that she might not neglect to confess it and make satisfaction for it by means of penance.

Similarly too, when she visited shrines, she held her eyes in check so as not to look voluntarily at the faces of human beings. When, however, it happened that she had suddenly looked into someone's face, at once, on that same chaplet that hung at her neck, she kept a token, until, through penance, satisfaction for it had been made.

From her infancy, she was accustomed to confess every Friday. But nevertheless, she was not content with this; no, she also confessed more than once on every day of the year concerning light words and thoughts. For in her there was fear of God together with great love of him.

On Fridays, indeed, because of Christ's passion and the bitterness of the drink of gall proffered to him before his death, she was accustomed to hold in her mouth a certain very bitter herb, which is called genciana. She also did this on other days when she had uttered some unconsidered or incautious word.

In making her confession, she was very humble and very prompt in fulfilling whatever things were enjoined upon her. Moreover, she so loved true humility that in no place did she wish to be without an instructor whom she humbly obeyed in all things. Moreover, she so loved poverty that everything that she had in her possession she put into the hands of another; and when she wished to have something, she asked her confessor the master for it in the name of Jesus Christ as humbly as if she had never possessed it.

She attended to the welfare of the persons living with her even more than she did to her own. For sometimes she was actually concealing her own ruined shoes even while asking for new ones to be given to others; and she acted similarly concerning other necessary things. Indeed, she very patiently endured everything that came; and the Blessed Virgin once spoke to her thus in a vision: "You," she said, should be like a mirror, clear and clean, and like a sharp thorn - a mirror through honest and godly behavior and through good example, but a thorn through denunciation of sinners.

In fact, Lady Bridget well demonstrated the latter point; for, wherever she was, she did this to the best of her ability. She showed it well in Famagusta while, in the presence of the king and the queen and the princes and the other magnates of the kingdom of Cyprus, she seriously and boldly narrated a revelation made to her in Jerusalem concerning the kingdom of Cyprus - despite the fact that at that time she was physically weak and infirm. This revelation too is contained in the books of the Heavenly Revelations.

Moreover, in Naples too she did not keep silent about a revelation made to her concerning the people of that same city but related it in the presence of the archbishop and three masters of theology and other doctors of canon and civil law and the other lords and prudent men, both clerical and lay. She intrepidly reproved the sins of the city and showed how they might amend their lives - just as Jesus Christ had instructed her in a revelation and as it is more clearly and more amply recorded in the books of revelations.

Furthermore, while she was in Jerusalem, she began to weaken; and this infirmity of hers lasted for a whole year. And both at sea and on land, she most patiently endured fatigue and pain; and it was of this infirmity that she died in Rome.

It happened, finally, in Rome - five days before the day of her passing - that our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in front of the altar that stood in her chamber. He showed himself with a joyful face and said to her: "I had done to you what a bridegroom usually does, concealing himself from his bride so that he may be more ardently desired. Thus I have not visited you with consolations during this time; for it was the time of your testing. Therefore, now that you have been tested, go forward and prepare yourself; for now is the time when - as I had promised you - before my altar, you shall be clothed and consecrated as a nun. And henceforth you shall be counted not only as my bride, but also as a nun and a mother in Vadstena."

This is a certain villa that is called by this name; and there stands that monastery of nuns and brothers whose construction was revealed to her by God and where the said lady was to be buried. Finally Christ said to her: "Nevertheless, know that you will lay down your body in Rome until it come to the place prepared for it. For it pleases me to spare you from your labors and to accept your will in place of the completed action."

After these and many other things had been said, she made mention of and arrangements for some persons living with her and whom, before death, she said she had seen standing in God's presence.

After those things had been heard, the Lord added these words: "On the morning of the fifth day, after receiving the sacraments, call together one by one all those whom I named above; and to them tell the things to be done. And thus, amidst these words and their hands, you will come to your monastery - i.e., into my joy; and your body will be placed in Vadstena." Then, as the fifth day approached, at the moment of dawn, Christ appeared to her again and consoled her. But when Mass had been said and after she had received the sacraments, in the hands of the aforesaid persons she sent forth her spirit.

Prayers

How to prepare before prayer

Mental prayer contains three parts: the preparation, the meditation, and the conclusion.

1. In the PREPARATION there are three acts: an act of faith, of the presence of God, and of adoration; 2, an act of humility and of sorrow for our sins, and, 3, a petition for light. They may be made in the following manner: My God, I believe Thee present within me; I adore Thee with my whole soul.

Be careful to make this act with a lively faith, for a lively remembrance of the divine presence contributes greatly to remove distractions. Cardinal Caracciolo, Bishop of Aversa, used to say that when a person is distracted in meditation there is reason to think that he has not made a lively act of faith.

2. Lord, I should now be in hell in punishment of the offences I have offered to Thee. I am sorry for them from the bottom of my heart; have mercy on me.

3. Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, give me light in this meditation, that I may draw fruit from it.

We must, then, recommend ourselves to the Blessed Virgin by saying a Hail Mary, to St. Joseph, to our guardian angel, and to our holy patron. These acts, says St. Francis de Sales, ought to be made with fervor, but should be short, that we may pass immediately to the meditation.

II. On entering on the meditation we must take leave of all extraneous thoughts, saying with St. Bernard, "O my thoughts! wait here;" after prayer we shall speak on other matters. Be careful not to allow the mind to wander where it wishes; but should a distracting thought enter, we must not be disturbed, nor seek to banish it with a violent effort, but let us

remove it calmly and return to God. Let us remember that the devil labors hard to disturb us in the time of meditation in order to make us abandon it. Let him, then, who omits mental prayer on account of distractions, be persuaded that he gives delight to the devil. It is impossible, says Cassian, that our minds should be free from all distractions during prayer. Let us, then, never give up meditation, however great our distractions may be. St. Francis de Sales says that if in mental prayer we should do nothing else than continually banish distractions and temptations, the meditation is well made. And before him St. Thomas taught that involuntary distractions do not take away the fruit of mental prayer. When we perceive that we are deliberately distracted, let us desist from the voluntary defect, and banish the distraction, but let us be careful not to discontinue our meditation.

The Fifteen Prayers of Saint Bridget to our Suffering Lord Jesus Christ

For a long time, St. Bridget wanted to know the number of wounds Our Lord received during His Passion. He one day appeared to her and said, "I received 5480 blows on My Body. If you wish to honor them in some way, say 15 Our Fathers and 15 Hail Marys with the following Prayers (which He taught her) for a whole year. When the year is up, you will have honored each one of My Wounds."

First Prayer

1 Our Father...

(Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.)

1 Hail Mary...

(Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.)

O Jesus Christ! Eternal Sweetness to those who love Thee. Joy surpassing all joy and all desire. Salvation and Hope of all sinners. Who hast proved that Thou hast no greater desire than to be among men, even assuming human nature at the fullness of time for the love of men, recall all the sufferings Thou hast endured from the instant of Thy Conception and especially during Thy Passion, as it was decreed and ordained from all Eternity in the Divine Plan. Remember, O Lord, that during the Last Supper with Thy disciples, having washed their feet, Thou gavest them Thy Most Precious Body and Blood and while at the same time Thou didst sweetly console them, Thou didst foretell them Thy coming Passion.

Remember the sadness and bitterness which Thou didst experience in Thy Soul as Thou Thyself bore witness saying, “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” Remember the fear, anguish and pain that Thou didst suffer in Thy Delicate Body before the torment of the Crucifixion, when, after having prayed three times, bathed in a sweat of blood. Thou wast betrayed by Judas, Thy disciple. Arrested by the people of a nation Thou hadst chosen and elevated. Accused by false witnesses. Unjustly judged by three judges during the Flower of Thy Youth and during the Solemn Paschal Season. Remember that Thou wast despoiled of Thy Garments and clothed in those of derision. That Thy Face and Eyes were veiled. That Thou wast buffeted, crowned with thorns and a reed placed in Thy Hands. That Thou was crushed with blows and overwhelmed with affronts and outrages. In memory of all these pains and sufferings which Thou didst endure before Thy Passion on the Cross, grant me before my death, true contrition, a sincere and entire confession worthy satisfaction and the remission of all my sins. Amen.

Second Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! True Liberty of Angels, Paradise of Delights, remember the horror and sadness which Thou didst endure when Thy enemies, like furious lions, surrounded Thee and by thousands of insults, spits, blows, lacerations and other unheard of cruelties, tormented Thee at will. In consideration of these torments and insulting words, I beseech Thee, O My Savior, to deliver me from all my enemies, visible and invisible and to bring me under Thy Protection to the perfection of Eternal Salvation. Amen.

Third Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Creator of Heaven and earth. Whom nothing can encompass or limit. Thou who dost enfold and hold all under Thy Loving Power, remember the very bitter pain Thou didst suffer when the Jews nailed Thy Sacred Hands and Feet to the Cross by blow after blow with big blunt nails and not finding Thee in a pitiable enough state to satisfy their rage, they enlarged Thy Wounds and added pain to pain and with indescribable cruelty, stretched Thy Body on the Cross, pulled Thee from all sides thus dislocating Thy Limbs. I beg of Thee, O Jesus, by the memory of this most Loving Suffering of the Cross, to grant me the Grace to fear Thee and to love Thee. Amen.

Fourth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Heavenly Physician, raised aloft on the Cross to heal our wounds with Thine. Remember the bruises which Thou didst suffer and the weakness of all Thy Members which were distended to such a degree that never was there pain like unto Thine. From the Crown of Thy Head to the Soles of Thy Feet, there was not one spot on Thy Body that was not in torment and yet, forgetting all Thy Sufferings, Thou didst not cease to pray to Thy Heavenly Father for Thy enemies saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Through this Great Mercy and in memory of this suffering, grant that the remembrance of Thy Most Bitter Passion may effect in us, a perfect contrition and the remission of all our sins. Amen.

Fifth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Mirror of Eternal Splendor, remember the sadness which Thou experienced when contemplating in the Light of Thy Divinity, the predestination of those who would be saved by the Merits of Thy Sacred Passion, Thou didst see at the same time, the great multitude of reprobates who would be damned for their sins and Thou didst complain bitterly of those hopeless lost and unfortunate sinners. Through this Abyss of Compassion and Pity, and especially through the Goodness which Thou displayed to the good thief when Thou didst say to him, “This day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” I beg of Thee, O Sweet Jesus, that at the hour of my death, Thou wilt show me Mercy. Amen.

Sixth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Beloved and Most Desirable King, remember the grief Thou didst suffer, when naked and like a common criminal, Thou was fastened and raised on the Cross. When all Thy friends abandoned Thee, except Thy Beloved Mother, who remained close to Thee during Thy Agony and whom Thou didst entrust to Thy faithful disciple when Thou saidst to Mary, “Woman, behold thy son!” and to St. John, “Son, behold thy Mother!” I beg of Thee, O My Savior, by the sword of sorrow which pierced the soul of Thy Holy Mother, to have compassion on me in all my trials and tribulations, both corporal and spiritual, and to assist me in all my trials, and especially at the hour of my death. Amen

Seventh Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Inexhaustible Fountain of Compassion. Who by a profound gesture of Love, said from the Cross, “I thirst!” Suffered from the thirst for the salvation of the human race. I beg of Thee, O My Savior, to inflame in our hearts the desire to tend toward perfection in all our acts and to extinguish in us the concupiscence of the flesh and the ardor of worldly desires. Amen.

Eighth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Sweetness of Hearts, Delight of The Spirit, by the bitterness of the vinegar and gall which Thou didst taste on the Cross for Love of us, grant us the grace to receive worthily, Thy Precious Body and Blood during our life and at the hour of our death, that They may serve as a remedy and consolation for our souls. Amen.

Ninth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Royal Virtue, Joy of the Mind, recall the pain Thou didst endure when, plunged in an ocean of bitterness at the approach of death, insulted, outraged by the Jews, Thou didst cry out in a loud voice that Thou wast abandoned by Thy Father, saying, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Through this anguish, I beg of Thee, O My Savior, not to abandon me in the terrors and pains of my death. Amen.

Tenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Who art the beginning and end of all things, life and virtue, remember that for our sakes, Thou was plunged in an abyss of suffering from the Soles of Thy Feet to the Crown of Thy Head. In consideration of the enormity of Thy Wounds, teach me to keep, through pure love, Thy Commandments, whose way is wide and easy for those who love Thee. Amen.

Eleventh Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Deep Abyss of Mercy. I beg of Thee, in memory of Thy Wounds which penetrated to the very Marrow of Thy Bones and to the Depth of Thy Being, to draw me, a miserable sinner, overwhelmed by my offenses, away from sin and to hide me in Thy Wounds until Thy anger and just indignation shall have passed away. Amen.

Twelfth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Mirror of Truth, Symbol of Unity, Link of Charity, remember the multitude of wounds with which Thou wast covered from head to foot, torn and reddened by the spilling of Thy Adorable Blood. O Great and Universal Pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy Virginal Flesh for the love of us! Sweetest Jesus! What is there that Thou couldst have done for us that Thou hast not done?! May the Fruit of Thy Sufferings be renewed in my soul by the faithful remembrance of Thy Passion, and may Thy Love increase in my heart each day until I see Thee in Eternity. Thou who art the

treasury of every real good and every joy, which I beg Thee to grant me, O Sweetest Jesus, in Heaven. Amen.

Thirteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Strong Lion, Immortal and Invincible King, remember the pain which Thou didst endure when all Thy Strength both moral and physical, was entirely exhausted, Thou didst bow Thy Head saying, “It is consummated!” Through this anguish and grief, I beg of Thee Lord Jesus, to have mercy on me at the hour of my death when my mind will be greatly troubled and my soul will be in anguish. Amen.

Fourteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Only Son of the Father, Splendor and Figure of His Substance, remember the simple and humble recommendation Thou didst make of Thy Soul to Thy Heavenly Father saying, “Father, into Thy Hands, I commend My Spirit!” And with Thy Body all torn, Thy Heart broken and the Bowels of Thy Mercy open to redeem us, Thou didst expire. By this Precious Death, I beg of Thee, O King of Saints, comfort me and help me to resist the devil, the flesh and the world, so that being dead to the world, I may live to Thee alone. I beg of Thee, at the hour of my death, to receive me, a pilgrim and an exile returning to Thee. Amen.

Fifteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! True and Fruitful Vine, remember the abundant outpouring of Blood which Thou didst so generously shed from Thy Sacred Body as juice from grapes in a wine press. From Thy Side, pierced with a lance by a soldier, Blood and Water issued forth until there was not left in Thy Body a single drop and finally, like a bundle of myrrh, lifted to the top of the Cross, Thy Delicate Flesh was destroyed, the very Substance of Thy Body withered and the Marrow of Thy Bones dried up. Through this bitter Passion and through the outpouring of Thy Precious Blood, I beg of Thee, O Sweet Jesus, to receive my soul when I am in my death agony. Amen.

Conclusion

O Sweet Jesus! Pierce my heart so that my tears on penitence will be my bread day and night. May I be converted entirely to Thee. May my heart be Thy perpetual habitation. May my conversation be pleasing to Thee and may the end of my life be so praiseworthy, that I may merit Heaven and there with Thy saints, praise Thee forever. Amen.

The Rosary

We highly recommend that all 15 decades of the Rosary be prayed daily. Our Lady repeatedly emphasized the importance of praying the Rosary each day in her messages at Fatima. She even said that Francisco would have to pray “many rosaries” before he could go to Heaven. Praying all 15 decades of the Rosary each day can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, for many it is best accomplished by praying a part of the Rosary at different times of the day, for example, the joyful mysteries in the morning, sorrowful mysteries at midday, and glorious mysteries in the evening. The Hail, Holy Queen only needs to be prayed at the end of the entire day’s rosary.

St. Louis De Montfort (+1710): “Blessed Alan de la Roche who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the Hail Mary (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world – Luke 1:28) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment.”

An essential part of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries, episodes in the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. This means thinking about them, visualizing them, considering the graces and merits displayed in them, and using them for inspiration to better know and love God. It is also common to focus on a particular virtue with each mystery.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

With your right hand, trace a cross by touching your forehead, then chest, left shoulder and right shoulder while saying: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He went down to the dead. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

SAY THREE "HAIL MARY" PRAYERS

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

* At the first "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases our faith'.

* At the second "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases our hope'.

* At the third "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases us in love'.

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

- ANNOUNCE THE MYSTERY (JOYFUL, SORROWFUL OR THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES)

* First Joyful Mystery – The Annunciation (Prayer about: Humility)

* Second Joyful Mystery – The Visitation (Prayer about: Love of Neighbor)

* Third Joyful Mystery - The Nativity (Prayer about: Poverty of Spirit)

* Fourth Joyful Mystery - The Presentation (Prayer about: Purity of mind and body)

* Fifth Joyful Mystery - The Finding of the Child Jesus In the Temple (Prayer about: Obedience)

* First Sorrowful Mystery - The Agony In the Garden (Prayer about: God's Will be done)

* Second Sorrowful Mystery - Scourging At the Pillar (Prayer about: Mortification of the senses)

* Third Sorrowful Mystery - The Crowning With Thorns (Prayer about: Reign of Christ in our heart)

* Fourth Sorrowful Mystery - The Carrying of the Cross (Prayer about: Patient bearing of trials)

* Fifth Sorrowful Mystery – The Crucifixion (Prayer about: Pardoning of Injuries)

* First Glorious Mystery – The Resurrection (Prayer about: Faith)

* Second Glorious Mystery – The Ascension (Prayer about: Christian Hope)

* Third Glorious Mystery - The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Prayer about: Gifts of the Holy Spirit)

* Fourth Glorious Mystery – The Assumption (Prayer about: To Jesus through Mary)

* Fifth Glorious Mystery - The Coronation (Prayer about: Grace of Final Perseverance)

- SAY ONE "OUR FATHER"

- SAY TEN "HAIL MARY" PRAYERS WHILE MEDITATING ON THE FIRST ROSARY MYSTERY (AFTER EVERY "HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE, BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS" ADD:

Joyful Mysteries

- * 'who you, o Virgin, has received through the Holy Spirit'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has carried to Elisabeth'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has given birth to'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has carried to the temple'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has recovered in the temple'...

Sorrowful Mysteries

- * 'who for us has sweated blood'...
- * 'who for us has been scourged'...
- * 'who for us has been crowned with thorns'...
- * 'who for us has carried the cross'...
- * 'who for us has been crucified'...

Glorious Mysteries

- * 'who has risen from the dead'...
- * 'who has ascended into heaven'...
- * 'who has sent us the Holy Spirit'...
- * 'who has taken you up, o Virgin, into heaven'...
- * 'who has crowned you, o Virgin, in heaven'...

- SAY ONE "GLORY BE"

- SAY THE "FATIMA PRAYER"

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls into heaven, especially those who are in most need of thy mercy. Amen.

- REPEAT THIS SEQUENCE FOR REMAINING MYSTERIES

SALVE REGINA

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

- FINISH WITH THE "SIGN OF THE CROSS"

With your right hand, trace a cross by touching your forehead, then chest, left shoulder and right shoulder while saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Prayer of St. Ephram

O Lord and Master of my life,
take from me the spirit of sloth, despondency, lust for power and idle
talk.

(Prostration)

But grant unto me, Thy servant,
a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

(Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King,
grant me to see mine own faults
and not to judge my brothers and sisters.
For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages.

Amen.

(Prostration)

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner. (Repeat 12 times, with as many
bows, and then again the whole prayer from the beginning throughout, and
after that one great prostration.)

Spiritual information you must know to be saved

Mortally sinful media!

“Know also this, that, in the last days, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Most people of this generation, even those who profess themselves Christian, are so fallen away in morals that even the debauched people who lived a hundred years ago would be ashamed of the many things people today enjoy. And this is exactly what the devil had planned from the start, to step by step lowering the standard of morality in the world through the media until, in fact, one cannot escape to sin mortally by watching it with the intention of enjoying oneself. Yes to watch ungodly media only for enjoyment or pleasure or for to waste time (which could be used for God), as most people do, is mortally sinful.

54 years ago (1956), Elvis Presley had to be filmed above the waist up on a tv-show because of a hip-swiveling movement. Not that it was an acceptable performance, everything tending to sexuality is an abomination, but still it serves to prove how much the decline has come since then, when even the secular press deemed inappropriate what today would be looked upon as nothing. But even at that time, in major Hollywood films like The Ten Commandments, could be seen both women and men that are incredibly immodestly dressed. The fall and decline of morals have been in progress ever since the invention of motion picture. God allowed this deceit to be invented because of people's sins, especially for sins of the flesh. The media have such power that it preconditions peoples mind in such a way - since people look at TV as reality - that what was shameful yesterday will be the norm today! So if the media shows immodesty as norm, norm it will become!

TV-series, films, cartoons

We already know that almost everything on television will have the most abominable impurities and abominations presented in them so that a parent should be appalled by it and refuse his children to even take part of it, but this, sadly, is not the case for most. You will be amazed at how far this goes. Even children cartoons which one could think was acceptable and modest, is far from acceptable or modest but even many times worse then the general media broadcasted for older viewers, which will be dealt with shortly.

Firstly, you will almost always see fornication and adultery or other sexual impurities and sins of the flesh presented throughout the godless media as the norm to live, along with a rejection of the traditional way that people lived in before the beginning of 19th century. The sexual suggestions and perversions are endless in these shows. To sit and watch such shows or to allow your children to watch such shows is not only insanity but a clear mortal sin.

Secondly, there is a comedic part on almost every show which seems to hold no sin, but when examined closely will be revealed for what it really is. For gloating (also called disability humor) which is a most abominable and uncharitable sin will most certainly be impossible to escape if you watch TV-series! This odious sin of gloating prevails in every kind of media such as cartoons, films and shows, where people are beating each other or laughing at the different calamities or stupidities that another person will experience. Think about how evil this is: to laugh at another person's calamity or sorrow! Yet, you cannot escape seeing this when you watch TV! Do to others as you would have them do to you, was one of the commandments of our Lord! (Matthew 7:12) - You would not want someone laughing or making fun of your calamities and miss-happenings, yet we laugh and approve it when sad things happen to others? Then we have the constant jokes about the Christian religion with countless of derogatory words uttered in a most blasphemous spirit by the media when it tries to depict how utterly stupid, foolish, and out of date it is to be a firm Bible believing Christian. The constant ridicule and mockery of God and the Christian religion should be sufficient cause for rejecting this mortally sinful filth entirely! Again, you would not approve of a show that blasphemed you, a friend, child or wife, yet you watch shows making a mockery of God and religion which is worth infinitely more than weak human beings?

Thirdly, we have the specifically evil sin of immodest clothing and make-up which every show holds as law to be followed, and there is no exception in cartoons for children. Most women-characters are half dressed or half naked in these cartoons showing off their whole body in a sexually suggestive way. This, in fact, is what the devil wants, for he preconditions children's sexuality to grow at a young age. The little mermaid for example, the main character in the Disney movie called "The Little Mermaid", is completely naked from the waist up except for a small covering of sea shells over her breasts which is outrageous to say the least! Sadly, this is how most characters dress! The woman-character in Aladdin the movie is immodestly dressed showing most parts of her body. She even sexually seduces one of the males in a scene for whatever reason, and this is what our kids are watching and learning, from Satan himself! If you have allowed your children to watch such things, you should be ashamed of yourself!

There is a perfect reason why young children become sexually active at a young age. Young children watching such films and shows imitates the behavior, movements and way of acting by the characters; for example: the eye-rollings, the seducing of men or of women, the hip-swirlings and the seducing way of moving the body and the seducing way of walking, etc.

Tinker bell, a character featured in many Disney shows, is considered to be one of the most important branding icons of Disney, (according to Wikipedia sources).

"Tinker Bell is illustrated as a young (sexy), blonde haired, big blue eyed, white female, with an exaggerated hour-glass (model-shaped) figure. She is clad in a short lime-green (ultra revealing miniskirt) dress with a rigid trim, and green slippers with white puffs. She is trailed by small amounts of pixie dust when she moves, and this dust can help humans fly if they 'believe' it will (more of the magic fairy tale crap and 'belief' in the occult, all for our children to watch). Some critics have complained that Tinker Bell is too sexually suggestive." (And this is supposed to be a character for children movies. Outrageous to say the least, even the secular world agrees!)

These are just some of the examples I can come to think of, and my knowledge about children shows is very limited. One with more knowledge could easily fill a number of volumes on the same subject.

The sin of immodest clothing and make-up brings up innumerable impure and lustful thoughts, which is just what the devil wants when he incites people to commit these sins of immodest clothing and painting the face with makeup, as only harlots and heathens did until recently when “Catholics” started to follow this trend. Those who do these things, do them for the sole reason of making others lust at them, or for to make themselves seem more attractive to others. This is sinful to say the least and very displeasing to God.

Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they were tempted to sexual impurities in their thoughts by the media they watched! Will you follow them or let your children follow them and be the cause of your greater sorrow, when on top of being condemned, you must endure to be tormented forevermore by your own child? Absolute madness! You must hinder your child to use makeup and immodest clothing at any cost! You can only hope to save yourself from hell if you do everything in your power to prevent your children going there. Are you? If they refuse to obey you, throw them out! If they are youngsters, why then don't they obey you? There is a perfect reason why sacred scripture commands chastisement in the education of our children!

“He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end... Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid: play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee. Instruct thy son, and labour about him, lest his lewd behaviour be an offence to thee.” (Ecclesiasticus 30:1-13)

Don't be fooled by the world. You do no sin whatsoever before God if you chastise your children in the education of righteousness. The world, or in truth, Satan, who rule this world, has made laws that says chastisement of children are wrong. This is one of many reasons he has succeeded to achieve a downfall of society! Remember that rebellious and ungodly children were one of the end times prophecies that the Bible mentioned. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Fourthly, there is the abominable and mortal sin of blasphemy which is uttered in almost every TV- show, even going so far as to exchange the name of God, Jesus or Christ for curse words. A few hundred years ago, people would have been horrified to commit this sin since it was then rightly punished by execution. But now, people commit this sin constantly and without fear, without anyone raising an eyebrow. Yet, when death comes, all blasphemers will open their eyes and find that they are in a sea of fire to burn and be tormented for all eternity. If you watch things which contain blasphemy, which would be almost every film or show in this age, then you are literally sick and despicable and Hell will be long for you unless you repent immediately and resolve to never do so again. Death will come and grab you whether you like it or not.

Fifthly, there is the universal acceptance of false religions, magic and occultism which was rightly punishable by death earlier in our history but which now is norm in the media. You

will see the horrible sin of magic and occultism in every kind of TV-show; for example, in animated cartoons it's almost 'always' the norm; it is also a frequent occurrence on other shows broadcasted for the general public such as Buffy the vampire slayer, Charmed, Sabrina the Teenage Witch, etc! Many famous comedies are also making this evil filth seem fun and acceptable. But then again, the norm of comedian shows is to make fun of things that are abominable and sinful. A person cannot watch comedy-shows without being guilty of grave sin, for how can a person take delight and laugh about things which displease God?

Just to show you how far the sin of idolatry, magic, new age and occultism have come in the media, the following will be presented about the major blockbuster movie hit, Avatar. This article will prove that a person watching media will be forced to agree or disagree with a number of events that unfolds throughout the storyline, and every time a person agrees with or fails to disagree with that which is against God, he in fact commits a grave sin. This is what makes the watching of media so deadly. People nowadays don't fathom the severity of this crime but it is easily understood to be a most evil crime when one realizes that God will judge our every thought as a deed.

James Cameron's, Avatar, is a movie where worshipping a tree and communing with spirits are not only acceptable; they are attractive. Avatar is also markedly pantheistic and essentially, the gospel according to James Cameron. This pantheistic theme that equates God with the forces and laws of the universe is outwardly depicted by the heroes and heroine in the movie who all worship Eywa, the "All Mother" Goddess, who is described as "a network of energy" that "flows through all living things."

Overall, the movie is strewn with ritualistic magic, communion with spirits, shamanism, and blatant idolatry as it conditions the audience to believe these pagan occult lies. In addition, the audience is led to sympathize with the Avatar and even ends up pulling for him as he is initiated into pagan rituals. Even the lead scientist becomes a pagan in the end, proclaiming that she is "with Eywa, she's real," and goes to be with her upon her death."

People nowadays don't fathom the severity of this crime of magic, idolatry and paganism but it is easily understood to be a most evil crime when one realizes that magicians and occultists are communing with the devil when they do their magical rituals or offerings, whether it be worshipping a tree or stone, or something made by human hand. We are constantly being bombarded throughout the media to accept, magic, paganism, spiritualism, occultists, etc, in other words, false religions, which clearly shows that Satan is involved here.

Psalms 95:5- "For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils..."

1 Cor. 10:20- "But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils."

If someone were to make a show that presented child perversion paedophilia as a good and normal thing to do, everyone would be appalled, but now the worldly media present the communing with demons as something good and allowable and no one raises an eyebrow. To watch such filth is mortally sinful and your torment in hell will be eternal if you watch such things or allow your children to watch such things.

Sixthly, there is the most evil sin of greed and love of possessions which is showed

universally on TV as something good and praiseworthy to follow. You will see the most extravagant displays of worldly excesses! This is abominable first off, since every kind of excess is an affront against the many poor people who don't have enough money to even feed themselves with, and secondly since it tempts people to seek these useless and unnecessary things such as expensive cars, houses, and golden necklaces etc... instead of being content with food, clothing and shelter as the Apostle tells us to be. If God judges even every thought that you will have, how much more will He not judge deeds which is what watching ungodly media is!

It should also be understood that media gives the person who watches it a drug-like experience, an experience of false and unholy fire. The most dangerous effect from media is the dream state it puts a person into. After watching something worldly which made an impression, this is what will occupy your mind and your feelings for most part of the day or even weeks to come. From the blockbuster movie Avatar, this demonstration can be seen clearer. A news article published in the Economic Times reads as following:

['Avatar' driving us to suicide, say fans](#)

LOS ANGELES: 'Avatar' may have enthralled worldwide audiences with its imagery of an utopian alien world but movie-goers have complained of depression and even suicidal thoughts after watching the sci-fi hit.

Fans of James Cameron's 3D magnum opus are seemingly finding it hard to separate fact from fiction and Internet forums have been flooded with posts by movie-goers plagued with suicidal thoughts about not being able to visit the planet Pandora, reported CNN online. North American fan site 'Avatar Forums' has received 2,000 posts under a thread entitled 'Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible'.

Forum administrator Philippe Baghdassarian said, "The movie was so beautiful and it showed something we don't have here on earth. I think people saw we could be living in a completely different world and that caused them to be depressed."

Forum user 'Okoi' writes, "After I watched 'Avatar' at the first time, I truly felt depressed as I 'wake' up in this world again."

It should be understood that this depression arise from a lack of faith in God. The world they really long for is not a fairy tale dream world as depicted in the movie Avatar, but in fact the realm of Heaven and the eternal vision of God – for this is where all humanity were destined to come to had they abstained from sinning and loving the world through their five senses. No one can be happy without God, for God is happiness. Depression arises from a guilty conscience when a person refuses to do what he should to achieve salvation and the eternal vision of God. Satan is exchanging a longing of the real Heaven in people's minds for a longing of fairy-tale-dreams in the media. Saddening to say the least!

A Christian should be spending his time on growing in his faith by praying, reading, and other good works, but most people do instead the contrary, and wastes most of their time on useless tales and fables, which will occupy their minds instead of God. That is why evil media leads countless souls to eternal damnation and the torments of hell. And this is also a clear

fulfillment of end times prophecies, which said many would turn from God unto fables and fairy tales. Are you one of those prophesied about?

“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

This prophecy also predicted the false theory of evolution which a Christian, of course, cannot believe in since it contradicts the biblical story of creation, with death entering into the world first after sin.

Cartoons

The second greatest evil after the sexuality and immodesty in children's shows is the constant bullying and fun making of the weaker characters, and the violence in both magazines, shows, films (and video games of course). Even the secular press acknowledges that children's shows oftentimes are more violent than other programs broadcasted for the general public! This article below was taken from the Daily Mail and clearly proves this point further.

“High levels of violence in cartoons such as Scooby-Doo can make children more aggressive, researchers claimed yesterday. They found that animated shows aimed at youngsters often have more brutality than programs broadcast for general audiences. And they said children copied and identified with fantasy characters just as much as they would with screen actors.

The study also found that youngsters tended to mimic the negative behaviour they saw on TV such as rumour-spreading, gossiping and eye-rolling. The U.S. psychologists quizzed 95 girls aged ten and 11 about their favourite TV shows, rating them for violent content and verbal and indirect aggression. The shows included Lost, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, American Idol, Scooby-Doo and Pokemon.

The researchers found that output aimed at children as young as seven, which included a number of cartoons, had the highest levels of violence. They recorded 26 acts of aggression an hour compared with just five in shows aimed at general audiences and nine in programmes deemed unsuitable for under-14s. 'Results indicated that there are higher levels of physical aggression in children's programmes than in programmes for general audiences,' the study said.”

The following story was taken from a Chinese newspaper further proving the point on how bullying, rebellion, disobedience, etc. is taught to children through anime/cartoons/magazines.

Educators Worry About Influence of Cartoons on Children

“Like many other eight-year-olds, Liu Yimin's favorite heroes aren't great scientists, or the national soccer team, or popular Chinese icons like Lei Feng. (According to the worldly norm, one should idolize weak human beings.)

His heroes are two Japanese animated characters who defy their parents and teachers. Local

educators are worried and say that some of characters may be a bad influence on youngsters. Xin San, an arrogant kindergarten student, bullies the weak, battles the strong, and constantly lusts after women - lots of women.

"I think the content of these shows is too mature for children," said Zhang Jinlian, director of the Shanghai Children and Juvenile Psychological Guidance Center. She said many students like to imitate the actions of these cartoon kids, causing trouble in the classroom and at home. Zhang would like to see steps taken to prevent children from reading books and watching videos and VCDs about Xin San, but the cartoon kid is just too popular to be avoided.

But today's kids don't want to be instructed, they want innovative cartoons with characters who are rebellious, Xu pointed out. Sales of books and VCDs of the two cartoon series, plus viewer ship levels of the "Chibi Maruko Chan" on Shanghai TV prove that rebellion is very popular with local youngsters.

Unfortunately, children are picking up those rebellious attitudes. Zhang said that many children now bully their parents into buying them a new toy - a trick that they picked up from Chibi Maruko Chan (undoubtedly they also bully their weaker classmates as they have been taught). Even worse, she said, some young boys lustfully gaze at their girl classmates."

A while ago, when the Catholic Church had a great impact on morality in the Christian society, people looked up to and adored our divine savior Jesus Christ, the blessed Virgin Mary, and the fame and virtues of the Saints. Every Catholic child had a patron Saint of his choosing to look up to and follow. What better examples in virtues and good manners can there possibly be?

Satan has in fact exchanged an adoration of God for man through the media. This is why children nowadays look up to actors, artists, heroes or characters mainly found in media. What child today would not want to be as Superman, Spiderman or any other Superhero, who is depicted in the media as invincible, adored, and beloved by all? Why are both grownups and children nowadays so prideful and violent, unloving, disobedient, lustful and arrogant, etc., if not because we through media have been conditioned to act and behave in this way? With the devil as an example through his debauched actors and animated characters, it will always end badly.

With holy examples, such as of our Savior himself and of the Saints, virtues such as humility, patience, charity and love flourish and is found. Therefore, learn to educate your children in the knowledge of Christ and of His Saints, give them Catholic books about Saints so that they can learn about virtues, and good Catholic films about the Saints. You can find a lot of different Catholic books from Saints at this site below, and more is added frequently!

<http://www.catholic-saints.net>

You cannot allow your children to watch anything unless you are 100% certain that the film, show or audio, they are viewing, have nothing in it that are against God's law. Unless you keep this standard, you will have your children tormenting you for all eternity in hell since you allowed evil influences and sins to effect them at an early age. You are responsible for their spiritual well being as long as they live under your roof. This, of course, should make

every parent very nervous. For if you had a real live tiger in your bedroom, you would never allow your child in there since the animal could kill them and eat them. The TV or media is far more dangerous than a tiger ever will be since it kills the immortal soul of your precious child! Yet, most people allow their children to watch TV without any supervision. If you say that you cannot supervise their viewing of media, then throw out the TV and other media appliances that they use to access sinful things or prepare yourself to suffer the eternal consequences in the fire of Hell for your actions!

Now a further examination will be made on the different kinds of programs that are presented throughout the media.

Now, you might ask: "So are you forbidding all media as wrong and sinful to watch?" The answer is no. Not all media is bad, but almost everything on television is however. You might have to watch less at what the box has to offer for you. There are for example numerous great religious films and series which is totally acceptable and good for the Spirit to watch (even though, in many films, especially newer ones, there will be immodest scenes or scenes of impurity. A Christian must not look on films or series which they know have bad scenes that can tempt them). Religious films are the best since they direct your mind toward spiritual things and God, which cannot be said of worldly films. When I am talking about Religious films, I am not referring to these worldly films disguised as religious films, which really has nothing at all to do about spirituality but really about the world, for example, stories about a man falling in love with a woman or a woman falling in love with a man, or other worldly motives, with jokes, much vain talk, etc. This is complete and utter nonsense and serves nothing at all for the edifying of soul, mind or body, and should be totally avoided as the trash it really is!

Most documentaries for example, (regarding on what documentaries you watch) can be watched even if most of them aren't good or edifying to the soul. Documentaries on prophecies, end times or doomsday, is acceptable since it draws your mind toward the end, death and coming judgment. Documentaries on animals, nature, space, etc. are in themselves not evil or sinful or contrary to God, and can be watched. However, they will many times be the beginning of great evil and sin. Whatever you watch or listen to, it is always a danger if you get too attached to it and allow too much time to be spent on it every day. As a rule, if you cannot stand a single day without visual and audible media, (television and music) this is a clear sign that you are addicted to media. So if you must watch something and if you can't abstain, you need to learn to watch programs that are not against God or Christian morals. But, the danger still of watching these are the same as with other bad shows since they will direct your mind toward worldly things, but at least it draws your mind towards God's creation which one may contemplate and draw fruit from, which cannot be said of fables and fairy-tale, pro-evolution anti-God films.

People however, that always prioritize worldly activities before spiritual ones will most assuredly lose their souls. A person must be able to make a resolution to leave worldly activities for hours per day and offer up those hours for God in solitude by praying and reading his words. Many people have time, but they spend it badly and chose to watch media or doing other fruitless works of damnation.

You would be a Saint if you had the same desire and longing for God as you have for worldly things. You can only receive a desire, love and longing for God as you have for worldly things

when He is whom you desire and strive for above all other things. This will not happen as long as you are over-attached to worldly things. You must also be able - or at least have a desire to be able to - to come to the point where you want to give up watching media completely. For if a person doesn't even desire the better part, how then can he grow? God is the better and best part!

All films and series that leads your mind toward fantasies and fables such as Lord of the rings, Heroes, Smallville, Avatar, etc, even if we were to say, for the sake of argument, that they have nothing in them against God (which is not true), should still be avoided, since they direct our minds from God, from the natural world we live in, toward fantasies and all kinds of thoughts referring thereto. This is the main cause for it being so dangerous and the reason why so many persons watching these shows have unwholesome unrealistic desires or depressions. For a person that spends much time on finding God, will evidently dream and long much for God and come close to Him. In contrast, a person that spends much time on the world, is far from God and dead before God!

Now you might ask: "May I then watch other worldly films or series if the story is fixed on realistic things or the creation of God?" The answer to this question is that it depends on what movie or show you want to watch. I would say that one can watch movies and series about the end of the world, the afterlife and the paranormal, etc, since it leads your mind toward the judgment and the death of the body to come which is a good thing. From this can be understood that it depends on what fruit can be drawn out from it to begin with. *"Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."* (Luke 3:9)

You will without a doubt bring forth bad fruit if you spend much time on bad things. So if the film or show is about worldly and vain things, then one should not watch such shows since the fruit thereof is empty and vain. This point can be further proved from sacred scripture.

"Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ..." (Colossians 2:8)

This pretty much rules out all the films, shows and series (anime series and video games as well) that has ever been made in the entire world.

News in itself isn't evil or contrary to God or morals, but most newspapers today have totally unacceptable pictures which make them extremely unsuitable to read. To read newspapers which you know will contain many unchaste, immodest and sexual pictures and useless stories about sex, etc., is complete idiocy and will lead to sins of the flesh if you cannot guard yourself. We advise you to never watch news on television or the like since it is so filled with sins that it is almost impossible to watch without seeing things that will injure your virtue like immodesty, make-up, blasphemy, gloating, lust, adultery etc... continuing in infinity. However, to watch news daily is hardly necessary and St. Alphonsus clearly rebukes people for this in his most excellent work, The True Spouse of Christ:

"St. Dorotheus says: "Beware of too much speaking, for it banishes from the soul holy thoughts and recollection with God." Speaking of religious that cannot abstain from inquiring after worldly news, St. Joseph Calasanctius said: "The curious religious shows that he has

forgotten himself." It is certain that he who speaks too much with men converses but little with God, for the Lord says: I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart. If, then, the soul wishes that God speak to its heart, it must seek after solitude; but this solitude will never be found by religious who do not love silence." If," said the Venerable Margaret of the Cross, "we remain silent, we shall find solitude." And how will the Lord ever condescend to speak to the religious, who, by seeking after the conversation of creatures, shows that the conversation of God is not sufficient to make her happy? Hence, for a nun that delights in receiving visits and letters, in reading the newspapers, and in speaking frequently of the things of the world, it is impossible to be a good religious. Every time that she unnecessarily holds intercourse with seculars, she will suffer a diminution of fervor."

You might ask: "Could not this way of viewing media then be applied to all shows?" The answer is no! Most shows are evil in themselves whether or not you fix your eyes on bad scenes. And the objects of discussion on those shows are often the cause of it being sinful, for it is vain, foolish or against God. News on the other hand is not unless you deliberately choose to delve in bad news or shows, such as celebrity news or celebrity shows such as 'Idol' and the like which is mortally sinful and complete and utter foolishness to watch and take delight in. For it is idol making of weak human beings. It's truly sickening to behold how people worship worldly fame along with sinful and weak human beings!

I will not make much mention of films or shows like Prison break, Heroes, 24, Matrix, Terminator, 300, X-men, Transformers, Spiderman and the like, etc. For there should be no need of explanation about these shows. They are all against God, they are all based on breaking God's commandments and doing evil or violence, or enjoying others doing evil or violence. Whether or not the world or you claim it's about good vs evil doesn't matter, for these shows in themselves are totally fruitless, often extremely violent, condoning crimes and sins, and often compels the viewer to agree or disagree with the actions of the characters, which more then often are more bad actions then 'good' if it is even possible to call them good. Every time you agree with or fail to disagree with something which obviously is against God, you committed sin! When you watch films or shows for pleasure which have the characters doing crimes and sins, you do in fact agree with them by your continual deed of watching and by your failure in renouncing it in the very same way a politician that is speaking against abortion would be a pro-abortionist when continually voting for allowing abortion. Thus, you are in fact in favor of evil by not denouncing and renouncing it completely!

Ask yourself, is it fitting for a child of God to take delight in such nonsense? Would God approve of these evil shows? Watching shows like this will only serve to stir you up towards wanting to watch more worldly and ungodly shows. Shows with much violence, superpowers, magic and fighting are the most dangerous since they excite our flesh and body in a false sensation or thrill exceedingly much. A person who does not cut this off from himself will lose his soul!

There are so much blasphemy, adultery, lust, pride, vanity, immodest clothing, idol-making of mortal human beings, greed, gluttony and sinful deeds and speech among countless other sins in today's media, that it is a real abomination and sickening to behold! It is in fact a real and eternal spiritual slaughter of billions of people – which is far more horrifying and lamentable than any physical slaughter will ever be – which we observe happening in real time without

anyone lifting an eyebrow! However, their laughter will turn into an eternal sorrow after the very moment their death will come! Then every word of mockery and blasphemy will have its special torment in hell for all eternity to come. Learn to meditate on Hell daily and you will not hesitate one second to quit watching evil and ungodly media!

[How to control your eyes](#)

The learning and controlling of your sight will be most necessary for salvation. You cannot fool God! Every time you look willfully with lust in your heart at an unchaste, enticing or unsuitable object, you have most assuredly committed a mortal sin! Therefore, whenever you come across something sinful (or even something licit but which is very beautiful) with your eyes, you must make a habit to look down or away – for the sin of lust will not be far away – making the sign of the cross and saying a Hail Mary, which is highly recommended and helps against impurities. Countless of Saints have rebuked people for the great error of failing to controlling their eyes. St. Ignatius Loyola for example rebuked a brother for looking at his face more than a brief moment. St. Bridget made a specific confession for every single face she saw during each day! This is true wisdom, for the world tells you to always watch the person you are with in the face. This will many times lead to sins and impure thoughts.

[How to control your speech](#)

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they grow much towards ungodliness.” (2 Timothy 2:16)

To talk overmuch of worldly and unnecessary things is also considered vain babblings and should be totally avoided. If you have nothing good to say, referring to God or the edification of the soul, then one should keep quiet. Vain babbling will lead to ungodliness as stated above, for that which a person talks much about, that he is full of in his heart. If God is not in the heart of man, then Satan must occupy that place, and you cannot serve both God and man!

[Video games](#)

Almost every kind of game that exists in our sad time has numerous mortally sinful things in them which make them impossible to play without going to hell. The younger generation especially, but also older people, is so perverted and drugged by these new games that they seem to live for nothing else!

Firstly, there are the countless games who have a person going around killing or hurting other humans or creatures for fun; for example, Counter-Strike, Halo, Grand Theft Auto, Starcraft, Modern Warfare, Gears of Wars, Tekken, etc. To play such a game is not only sick but abominable. Think about it: to play a game for fun or pleasure which is constituted of the murder or hurt of another being!

God solemnly declares that he will judge our every thought, how much more then will he judge our deeds? When we in our mind take delight and enjoy killing or hurting other beings, God takes this as an act in the very same way as he judges us as murderers if we hate our

brother, or, as an adulterer if we look at a woman with lust in our heart. What then will God judge you to be when you in your heart love abominable things?

Secondly, there is the constant danger of hate, uncontrollable wrath, and pride in games when it doesn't go as people would like it to go, and this is more true when playing games online. For when people think of themselves that they are good in the game they play, they are puffed up and deceived into thinking that this victory in a worthless game actually makes them someone. This is truly pathetic! But if someone then beats them, their pride and arrogance gets hurt, and they get mad, angry and wroth. Who have not had experience of this in online-gaming? Sure, these things happen on single player games as well but it isn't as common. Online games are by far the worst and sinful of all the games, since they not only affects you, but the others you play with as well. Do you understand now why online games are the most dangerous of all the games? Do you realize now that every person you have affected by your gaming will demand just vengeance over you, unless you blot these sins out by penance, repentance and confession? Giving others a bad example and being the cause or accessory of another person's damnation is the worst of all the sins one can be guilty of in this life. Every single thought, word, and deed will be carefully judged and avenged the moment you die. You cannot hide from death.

Thirdly, there are countless of games who try to display magic and the occult as not only acceptable but even good and praiseworthy; for example, World of Warcraft, Diablo, Oblivion, etc. Yes in those games, one is even awarded by magic and occult themes for murdering or hurting the opponent. Eternal Hell will be the home of all you who plays such games, for they are all against God, they are all based on breaking God's commandments and doing evil and violence, or enjoying others doing evil and violence. Whether or not you or the world say its good vs evil, or whether it be humans or monsters you are murdering or hurting, does not change the fact that the games in themselves are totally evil and fruitless, often extremely violent, and as with movies, often compels the player to take actions, agree or disagree with occurrences, which in godly terms are unacceptable and abominable. Playing these games will only serve to stir you up towards wanting to play more. Games with much violence and fighting, or with the ability of sinning in pride by show-offs, or with much usage of magic-powers of the occult, or with the ability to achieve personal fame in a fantasy land, or the show-off with skills, as with online-games, are all the most dangerous since they serve to stir up the flesh and body the most in a false and unholy fire of pleasure and thrill. A person that doesn't cut this off from himself will in fact lose his soul!

Pro-sports

Pro-sports may seem to have no sin in it, but countless of mortal sins will be exposed when one examines it carefully:

First, almost every kind of pro-sports supports the mortal sin of gambling, and it is just a fact that these teams or players get a large portion of their pay-check from gambling. Pro-sports is in fact one of the biggest, if not the biggest generator of the mortal sin of gambling, which has destroyed countless of families and lead millions of poor souls to despair, suicide and hell. Thus, those who watch these games, watch people who are getting paid for supporting and making the mortal sin of gambling exist. To enjoy the eternal soul killing of other human

beings is a clear cut mortal sin.

Second, almost every kind of pro-sport is played on Sundays which is a clear mortal sin since it is a work for these players and they get a pay-check from it. Therefore, they are breaking one of God's Ten Commandments, and there is no excuse for such things. It is a clear mortal sin to enjoy someone committing mortal sin.

Third, as we can see from the Book of the Machabees, the Jewish people neglected the divine worship in order to attend to different sport festivities at the arena. This is now prophetically fulfilled in many people who call themselves Catholic. For instead of praying the Rosary, reading the word of God and playing with and educating their children in good Christian morals as the Sunday is intended for, they watch these sinful games while placing their children in front of another TV set, neglecting their spiritual well being. Many saints teach that sports in of itself is no sin - which it of course isn't - but when it becomes too serious and more than a fun game between friends or when one take too much delight in it or makes too big thing of that which has no value, then they unanimously teach that it becomes sinful.

St. Francis de Sales- "Sports, plays, festivities, etc, are not in themselves evil, but rather indifferent matters, capable of being used for good or ill; but nevertheless they are dangerous, and it is still more dangerous to take great delight in them."

St. Francis de Sales- "Walking, harmless games, music, instrumental or vocal, field sports, etc., are such entirely lawful recreations that they need no rules beyond those of ordinary discretion, which keep every thing within due limits of time, place, and degree. So again games of skill, which exercise and strengthen body or mind, such as tennis, rackets, running at the ring, chess, and the like, are in themselves both lawful and good. Only one must avoid excess, either in the time given to them, or the amount of interest they absorb; for if too much time be given up to such things, they cease to be a recreation and become an occupation; and so far from resting and restoring mind or body, they have precisely the contrary effect. After five or six hours spent over chess, one's mind is spent and weary, and too long a time given to tennis results in physical exhaustion; or if people play for a high stake, they get anxious and discomposed, and such unimportant objects are unworthy of so much care and thought. But, above all, beware of setting your heart upon any of these things, for however lawful an amusement may be, it is wrong to give one's heart up to it. Not that I would not have you take pleasure in what you are doing,—it were no recreation else,—but I would not have you engrossed by it, or become eager or over fond of any of these things."

Fourthly, people are spending billions of dollars on something that is supposed to be a game of fun. They have made a worthless game which holds no significance whatsoever, to become something serious. Think about it. People say: This or that person runs so and so fast or won this or that game. And people think about it as though it is some kind of achievement worthy of praise, when it in fact is saddening and abominable since it leads souls to hell. It is grown people valuing a worthless game or sport as something that holds significance or value: it is truly pathetic. They waste their money and time on this filth when they could be trying to help souls that are falling daily to the eternal fire in hell.

"And so the human heart which is cumbered with useless, superfluous, dangerous clings becomes incapacitated for that earnest following after God which is the true life of devotion.

No one blames children for running after butterflies, because they are children, but is it not ridiculous and pitiful to see full-grown men eager about such worthless trifles as the worldly amusements before named, (SPORTS, balls, plays, festivities, pomps), which are likely to throw them off their balance and disturb their spiritual life.” (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction into the Devout Life*)

Fifthly, most of the different athletes or players are very immodestly dressed in clothes that are absolutely abominable for God since they are tight and reveal so much flesh. Only a few hundred years ago, women would have been arrested and jailed for wearing the clothes that athletes or players wear now. To watch any game or sport that supports or condones the five reasons mentioned above is totally sinful and any honest person who has not refused to meditate on hell and who realizes that it is possible that he or she may go to hell will agree as long as he thinks about this issue in a rational and calm manner. Don't allow your dependency on sports to trivialize clear cut mortal sins that are acted out in front of everyone. Repent before it is too late!

On Music

It is just a fact that all kinds of popular music are mortally sinful trash that is made by the Devil for the sole reason to drag your soul to an eternal hell fire. There will be countless of impure suggestions toward sin along with a rejection of any kind of morality and decency. Popular music praises sin, and oftentimes speak against God and morality. In short, it contains the same errors and sins that worldly media have, such as: immodest clothing, adultery, blasphemy, foul language and cursing, greed, fornication, make-up, vanity, gloating, magic, occultism, acceptance of false religions, idol-making of mortal humans etc... and are many times even worse. Popular songs that doesn't praise the idolatry and worship of man is hard to find today, and its even harder today to find popular songs which does not praise or worship sin and worldliness as norm. But worse still are the music-videos. A person cannot even listen to these songs without grave sin, but how much more then does a person sin when watching these sinful music-videos with half naked women/men worshiping sin and the occult by deed and example? This is sadly what many of your children are watching daily on the TV you have given them! You must reject this evil music entirely and not accept this to be played in your home.

Not all music are bad or sinful, you can for example listen to religious music, instrumental music, classical music or other music in line with decency and morals. But the highest good is of course not to listen to music at all. Giving up one's own will is always the highest good.

The best music which one may listen to is of course religious music, since it draws your mind and heart toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, the joy of Heaven, etc.

The next best music which one may listen to is classical music and instrumental music where no singing is involved, for this will not affect your mind toward worldly things as worldly songs always otherwise do.

The worst kind of music one could listen to is music which sings about worldly affairs. A person that listens much to music should avoid listening to worldly songs, otherwise he or she will be drawn toward these worldly things and affairs which are sung about. It is also very necessary to test yourself if you are addicted to music in any way, even totally acceptable

music. This is easily done by going a few days without music so that you can test if some withdrawal symptoms effect you. All addictions of earthly things are evil and effect the soul in a harmful way. Just because you don't see or understand the effect doesn't mean that it isn't happening. Spiritual sloth and depression among other things are common attributes of an addiction to media or music.

The effects from the wrong kind of music, and secular songs are very dangerous. There are numerous quotes from the secular world that can be brought forth to prove this point.

"Music directly represents the passions of states of the soul-gentleness, anger, courage, temperance...if one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person..." (Quote from Aristotle)

Brain specialists, Dr. Richard Pellegrino declared that music has the uncanny power to "...trigger a flood of human emotions and images that have the ability to instantaneously produce very powerful changes in emotional states." He went on to say: "Take it from a brain guy. In 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

Dr. Allan Bloom is quite correct when he asserts that "popular music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire... but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored ... popular music gives children, on a silver plate, with all the public authority of the entertainment industry, everything their parents always used to tell them they had to wait for until they grew up ... Young people know that rock and popular music has the beat of sexual intercourse ... Never was there such an art form directed so exclusively to children...(Every Catholic should understand that masturbation is a clear mortal sin!) The words implicitly and explicitly describe bodily acts that satisfy sexual desire and treat them as its only natural and routine culmination for children who do not yet have the slightest imagination of marriage or family." (Dr. Allan Bloom, Closing of the American Mind, pp. 73-74).

Dr. Allan Bloom: "Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music. When they are in school and with their families, they are longing to plug themselves back into their music. Nothing surrounding them - school, family, church - has anything to do with their musical world. At best that ordinary life is neutral, but mostly it is an impediment, drained of vital..."

Dr. Paul King, medical director of the adolescent program at Charter Lakeside Hospital, in Memphis, TN, says more than 80% of his teen patients are there because of rock music. Dr. King says, "the lyrics become a philosophy of life, a religion."

To allow yourself or your children to have any kind of music like rock, pop, rap, techno, trance, or any kind of music that is even remotely similar to this is mortally sinful and really idiotic when presented with these facts. Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they refused to stop listening to bad and sinful music! You will have your children eating your heart out for all eternity in hell, because of the violent hatred they will have against you, since you could have hindered them in their sin, but refused to do so.

[On Books](#)

"Bad books will abound over the earth, and the spirits of darkness will everywhere spread universal relaxation in everything concerning God's service..." (Prophecy of La Salette, 19th of September 1846)

According to Catholic Prophecy, bad books would dominate in the end, and we can now see this happening right in front of our eyes with the worldly school system and with worldly evil books like the Harry Potter series which teaches kids that magic and the occult is something good and praiseworthy to do or enjoy. Magic is an abominable mortal sin which was rightly punished by execution when the Catholic Faith was in control of Europe and South America. But now, blinded "Catholics" not only tell their kids that being a magician or an occultist is fine, they also buy these books to their kids. Think about it: If someone made a game on how to make contact with demons and on top of this sold this for your children to play with in stores, then every Christian would be appalled, for every Christian know that making contact with demonic spirits are possible. Yet, many parents let their children read filth or watch movies which portray magic and channeling with demonic spirits as normal and good.

Believe it or not, the example used has now in fact become a reality because of parents as yourself, whom says that bad is good and good is bad. Satan has no limit, he would do even worse if the world or God would allow him. Sadly, as time goes on however, worse things will become a norm.

[Ouija board a controversial toy for tots](#)

Toys R Us is selling Ouija boards, promoting them as acceptable for children as young as eight years old.

The pink edition of the Ouija board is listed for girls eight-years-old and up while the regular version is designated for all children eight and up. Stephen Phelan, communications manager of Human Life International, checked the website and reports that the findings are disturbing.

"It is just troubling that these things are treated as casually as any other game, like Monopoly or anything else on this Toys R Us site -- and I think it's something Christians should be aware of and really not support," he states.

"If you go to the comments section on the Toys R Us [web]site, you'll read comments from people who talk about being obsessed with it, talk about missing school for it, talk about the spirits they spoke to on the other side and how creepy it was," Phelan describes.

The communications manager adds that the primary groups that deny the evils of the Ouija board are the ones who deny the spirit world entirely. He goes on to say Christians have a biblical mandate.

"We're supposed to deal with the truth only," he notes. "We're supposed to have nothing to do

with dark spirits. We're not supposed to dabble in anything that would compromise our souls, and that's exactly what this does." The manufacturer of the product is Hasbro.

Lord of the Rings is another famous book series which presents magic, occultism, fairy tales and fables as something good and praiseworthy but is in reality just another abomination before the Lord. Sadly, many "Catholics" refuses to accept these facts and still believes that Lord of the Rings is good or even Catholic. You can fool yourself, but you cannot fool God!

"For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

St. Teresa even confessed that reading books which in themselves was not evil, was still a beginning of great harm and lukewarmness on her part. What then are one to say about evil media, evil video games and sinful stinking books? A person cannot do these things without becoming completely lukewarm and cold in the service of God exactly as it also happened to the glorious St. Theresa, for those who always seek after worldly things are in fact diminishing in the fervor of God!

The following quote further proving this point was taken from the Life of St. Teresa- "What I shall now speak of was, I believe, the beginning of great harm to me. I contracted a habit of reading books; and this little fault which I observed was the beginning of lukewarmness in my good desires, and the occasion of my falling away in other respects. I thought there was no harm in it when I wasted many hours night and day in so vain an occupation, even when I kept it a secret from my father. So completely was I mastered by this passion, that I thought I could never be happy without a new book."

Doesn't this sound familiar? Don't we all think as Teresa did, that we cannot be happy without our daily media, our evil movies and series, our bad video games or bad books? If the effect on this Saint was the start of a great harm, what then will it be for you, when what you do in comparison with her is infinitely more damaging and dangerous to your soul? How utterly stupid and foolish is it not to spend one's time reading bad worldly books, when one can spend time reading good Catholic books about virtue that would edify soul, mind and body? You will find innumerable good Catholic books if you just look for them, one good place to start is here: <http://www.catholic-saints.net/>

"To a spiritual life the reading of holy books is perhaps not less useful than mental prayer. St. Bernard says reading instructs us at once in prayer, and in the practice of virtue. Hence he concluded that spiritual reading and prayer are the arms by which hell is conquered and paradise won..." St. Alphonsus

Burn every book, film or music album immediately which can be accounted to be sinful, and repent, do penance, and confess of this evil. As you would throw away poison in order that it may not be able to hurt yourself or your child, do the same here. Think about pleasing God first and not yourself or your child. Life is too short and Hell is too long and painful to refuse to follow God's law.

Home-schooling

For the Love of God, keep your children away from public school, (if that option is available for you) and the company of other bad men. You must do everything in your power to hinder the worldly school-system from indoctrinating your children, even going so far as moving from your country if your country forces public school on children. The responsibility of an eternal soul that is greater than the universe must not be lightly dealt with. If you can home-school your kids but doesn't do it, then you really don't care for the spiritual well being of your children. How can a Catholic parent with good conscience let his kids go to public school where he know they will be exposed to bad influences by other children, and brainwashed by teachings such as evolution and sexual education? Most of the things we learn in school is superfluous anyway and will never be needed. We are bombarded with unnecessary teachings that will occupy much of our time. This will lead souls to forget God and their own spiritual well being! The school system before was very different from today, for back then most states was Christian, and God and the Bible was not banned from school.

Will you allow your children to go to public school and go out with worldly or ungodly friends? Then sadly, you will in fact lose them to the world! God does not tell us as much as to be on guard against demons as with men (Matthew 10:17), for men are oftentimes more harmful to us then the devils are, for demons can be expelled by invoking the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, but man on the other hand cannot be expelled in the same way. And if a man tries to change his life, he will be reviled, despised, and called a most miserable fool, a good for nothing and a man of no education. Many weak souls sadly turn back to the vomit from such and like reproaches out of fear for the loss of human respect!

On Masturbation

Since so many are coming out of mortal sin and are convincing themselves that certain things are not sins, we must preach against those sins with some specificity lest people perish in their ignorance.

Masturbation is definitely a mortal sin. There are about three places where St. Paul gives a list of some of the main mortal sins which exclude people from Heaven. These lists do not comprise every mortal sin, of course, but some of the main ones. Well, it always puzzled many people exactly what is being referred to in the following passages by the sin of “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.” St. Paul says that these sins exclude people from Heaven. Does “effeminacy” refer to acting like a homosexual? What does “uncleanness” refer to?

Galatians 5:19-21- “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, **uncleanness**, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11- “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate**, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,

nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Ephesians 5:5-8- “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, **nor unclean person**, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

St. Thomas Aquinas identifies masturbation as the biblical “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. II-II, Q. 154, A. 11: “I answer that, As stated above (A6,9) wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called “the unnatural vice.” This may happen in several ways. **First, by procuring pollution, without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure: this pertains to the sin of “uncleanness” which some call “effeminacy.”** Secondly, by copulation with a thing of undue species, and this is called “bestiality.” Thirdly, by copulation with an undue sex, male with male, or female with female, as the Apostle states (Romans 1:27): and this is called the “vice of sodomy.” Fourthly, by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation.”

Thus, not only is masturbation a mortal sin, but it’s a mortal sin which is identified in three different places in Scripture as one which excludes from the Kingdom of God. It’s also classified by St. Thomas as one of the sins against nature, for it corrupts the order intended by God. That’s probably why it’s called “effeminacy.” Though it’s not the same as the abomination of Sodomy, it’s disordered and unnatural. We believe that this sin – since it’s contrary to nature and is classified as “effeminacy” and “the unnatural vice” – is the cause of some people being given over to unnatural lusts (homosexuality).

Therefore, people who are committing this sin need to cease the evil immediately and, when prepared, make a good confession. If people are really struggling in this area, then they are not near the spiritual level where they need to be. God’s grace is there for them; but they need to pray more, pray better, avoid the occasions one of sin (bad media being one of them) and exercise their wills. They need to consistently pray the 15-decade Rosary (i.e. daily). They need to put out more effort spiritually and then it shouldn’t be a problem.

[Vanity, Immodest dressing, and makeup](#)

Our Lady of Fatima: “The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our

Lord and are not of God."

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women [and men] of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful." (1 Peter 3:3-6)

The divine authority of God's word demands that you always dress humbly by not wearing tight clothes that show your breasts or your behind or by showing too much skin that leads to temptation, and that you also abstain from using any kind of makeup, jewelry, and accessories (except for Rosaries or Brown Scapulars and the like which is a very great way to protect oneself against the devil) in order not to give a bad example or tempt your neighbor into carnal lust and sin. For every single person you have tempted with your immodest appearance will demand that God executes his righteous vengeance on you since you tempted them into lustful thoughts!

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in St. Bridget's revelations, that all who uses make-up or immodest clothing will be especially tormented for every single person that have seen them in their entire life unless they amend before the moment of their death, which is, sad to say, impossible to know when it will be. That can be thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in hell for all eternity! What a horror! That of course means you cannot go and bathe in public since that would be even more immodest and immoral! The world has indeed changed very much the last 100-200 years; yet, no one should think that he could do these things just because they are universally accepted. Do you want to go with the majority? Then, sadly, Hell awaits you for all eternity!

"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God." (Deut 22:5).

Women should not dress or act like men, for this is an abomination in God's eyes. God created the human race with two genders, intending each to have his and her proper place in Creation. Men and women are not meant to behave or dress the same manner. Part of the beauty of the human race is found in the differences between men and women.

We each live within a larger society. We are each influenced by the culture around us. Yet society and culture often teach us false things, which lead us away from God. Most women (at least in Western society and culture) dress and act very much like men. They seek the same roles in society, the family, and the Church. They are following a popular teaching of our culture today, that women and men are meant to have the same roles, and especially that women are meant to take up roles formerly held only or mainly by men. They are displaying their adherence to this teaching by dressing like men. This teaching of our culture is contrary to the teaching of Christ.

God wants men and women to act and dress according to their gender and the place God has given each one in Creation. Clothing and hairstyles are expressions of one's thoughts, behavior, and attitude. Women are not meant to behave like men, nor to have the same roles as

men, therefore they should not dress or groom themselves like men. And vise versa.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:17-19).

Saint Padre Pio used to refuse to hear the confession of women who were wearing pants or an immodest dress.

Padre Pio on modern-day fashions

1 Timothy 2:9: "In like manner I wish women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety..."

Galatians 5:19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty..."

Padre Pio had strong views on female fashions in dress. When the mini-skirt craze started, no one dared to come to Padre Pio's monastery dressed in such an inappropriate fashion. Other women came not in mini skirts, but in skirts that were shortish. Padre Pio got very upset about this as well.

Padre Pio tolerated neither tight skirts nor short or low-necked dresses. He also forbade his spiritual daughters to wear transparent stockings. He would dismiss women from the confessional, even before they got inside, if he discerned their dress to be inappropriate. Many mornings he drove one out after another – ending up hearing only very few confessions. He also had a sign fastened to the church door, declaring: "By Padre Pio's explicit wish, women must enter his confessional wearing skirts at least eight inches (20 cm) below the knees. It is forbidden to borrow longer dresses in church and to wear them for the confessional."

Padre Pio would rebuke some women with the words, "Go and get dressed." He would at times add: "Clowns!" He wouldn't give anyone a pass, whether they were people he met or saw the first time, or long-time spiritual daughters. In many cases, the skirts were many inches below the knees, but still weren't long enough for Padre Pio! Boys and men also had to wear long trousers, if they didn't want to be kicked out of the church.

The immodest have in truth a special place in hell waiting for them since they are the source of the most abominable sins of the flesh, as St. Paul teaches us in First Corinthians, *"Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body!" (1 Cor 18)*

This should of course be understood in the sense of literal fornication as well as fornication in the mind which also is a mortal and damnable sin! You will be held accountable for every eye that have seen you if you use make-up or immodest clothing. That can account for thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in hell for all eternity! Even if you don't

use any make-up or dress vainly, God will still judge you to hell if you take delight in vain thoughts or have vain opinions of yourself. If a single thought can damn a person, how much more should tempters with immodest clothing and makeup be damned! This accounts for all kinds of makeup a person may use for vanity. How abominable to want to be accepted for your appearance rather than for your opinions! Oh, vanity, you shall soon rot in the grave, but your soul shall burn for ever more in hell since you thought to make your exterior beautiful, and, in so doing, perverted your interior.

On bad thoughts

"But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)

God solemnly declares that he will judge our every thought, how much more then will he judge our deeds? When we in our mind take delight in sinful thoughts, God takes this as an act in the very same way as he judges us as murderers if we hate our brother, or, as an adulterer if we look at a woman with lust in our heart. What then will God judge you to be when you in your heart love abominable things?

No one can escape to have bad thoughts, for we are not yet angels but mere men. We cannot escape these bad thoughts, but we can refuse to enjoy them. Don't be surprised if you have all kinds of abominable thoughts. Many people are unlearned and do not understand that this is Satan tempting and giving them these thoughts. Sure, many bad thoughts arise from various bad occasions you have put yourself in during the course of the day or life, but still, if you do not think about these thoughts willfully and it still assail you, then it must be Satan tempting you!

Every time you get bad thoughts against your own will, and you resist them, you have not committed any sin.

When you get bad thoughts against your will and you enjoy them a little, and repents almost immediately, you have still committed sin.

If you however, willfully delve in bad thoughts and enjoy them, you have without a doubt committed mortal sin! A clearer demonstration of this can be seen in St. Bridget's revelations:

The Son of God speaks to the bride (St. Bridget): "What are you worried and anxious about?" She answered: "I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me." The Son answered: "This is truly just. Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will.

But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin. Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent...

...God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them, God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them.

Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person's negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned...

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/saints/st-bridget/saint-bridget-of-sweden-book3.php>

Dances, Pubs, Balls

“There is not a commandment of God which dancing does not cause men to break! Mothers may indeed say: ‘Oh, I keep an eye on their dress; you cannot keep guard over their heart.’ Go, you wicked parents, go down to Hell where the wrath of God awaits you, because of your conduct when you gave free scope to your children; GO! It will not be long before they join you, seeing that you have shown them the way so well! Then you will see whether your pastor was right in forbidding those Hellish amusements.” (*The Curé D’Ars, St. Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney*, p. 146)

St. Alphonsus (c. 1755): “In the year 1611, in the celebrated sanctuary of Mary in Montevergine, **it happened that on the vigil of Pentecost the people who thronged there profaned that feast with balls, excesses, and immodest conduct, when a fire was suddenly discovered bursting forth from the house of entertainment** where they were feasting, so that in less than an hour and a half it was consumed, and **more than one thousand five hundred persons were killed. Five persons who remained alive affirmed upon oath, that they had seen the Mother of God herself, with two lighted torches set fire to the inn.**” (*The Glories of Mary*, p. 659.)

From these quotes, everyone can see how evil dances are. Dancing causes thousands of tempting and lascivious thoughts that leads countless of lost souls to hell. To obstinately defend dances between boys and girls or between men and women is absolutely despicable, and those parents who allow their children to go to such events or those who even at times force their children to such events, will experience the most excruciating torment in hell

unless they amend immediately. To go to pubs which only sell alcohol or which propagate gambling or other mortal sins is absolutely unacceptable and sinful. These places were fervently preached against by St. John Vianney, and he called them real hell holes and the cause of countless of mortal sins!

Keep holy thy Sabbath day or Sunday

Since many people who are reading this have not been taught these concepts by modernist heretics, we must point out a few other things in this regard: servile works are forbidden on Sundays; people should not do laundry on Sundays; people should not do yard work (such as mowing the lawn, etc.) on Sundays; people should not shop food on Sundays unless they are starving etc... Exceptions to this would be work that absolutely must be done. For example, making a fire in your home so that you can be warm and survive is works that are completely acceptable. If you are able to make your food for the whole family before the Sunday, you should do so. One should not spend the Sunday on making food for the family which may take several hours of the day. You may of course (if you don't have any prepared food) take time to make something small for you or the family which does not require much of your time or take some food that you already have and warm it up. You cannot cut wood on Sundays and you must restrict yourself to only do things that are absolutely necessary for survival. This, of course, implies some preplanning, but no one should refuse to obey the divine commandments since this action will undoubtedly lead to eternal damnation. An obedient person will see the beauty of God forcing man to rest from physical works.

To do other unnecessary works on Sundays is completely unacceptable unless you starve and don't have the means necessary to support your family. In the richer countries, even going so far as begging or receiving social welfare checks every month is far better than to do unnecessary work on Sundays, since this not only damns yourself, but also damns your employer. Your employer will in fact be punished for every single person he has allowed or forced (by threatening with layoffs) to work on Sundays. That can be thousands and thousands of people attacking one man for all eternity! What a horror!

If you have exhausted all the options for receiving an income, for ex: looking for another job or moving to another place, or any other lawful means of receiving an income, (like receiving social welfare checks for the support of the necessities for you or your family, as long as this do not imply that you have to compromise your faith in any way,) then you are not obligated to do it and can safely work on Sundays as long as it is your last option. Below are some examples of acceptable reasons to work on Sundays.

If you cannot continue with home-schooling your children because of the change in your work schedule for example, this would be an acceptable reason with continuing to work on Sundays, another example would be if you had to move to a bad neighbourhood with much drugs, violence or lasciviousness that would influence you or your family in a sinful way, or if by quitting your work, you may be forced to take another work that is sinful or immoral, would be another reason to continue with work on Sundays until you have found another work where you are not forced to work on Sundays or forced to put your family's spiritual wellbeing in jeopardy.

This goes to say if the work you do is acceptable before God. If you sin against God by the specific work you do, such as selling contraception, porn, bad newspapers with immodest images or stories about sex or other sins etc, then you cannot go to that work even if you starve or don't have the means to support yourself or your family. In such cases you have to put your entire trust in God. You cannot be the cause of your brothers mortal sins without yourself being guilty of mortal sin!

“Therefore I say to you: Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat: and the body is more than the raiment... seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Lk. 12:22-24, 27-28, 31)

However, in the poorer countries where there is no chance of getting social welfare or income in any other way, it is totally acceptable to work on Sundays as long as the person must do it in order to survive. Many people do not operate under these conditions but work on Sundays in order to have more money than they need to survive. Yes, many people have the means necessary to stay away from work on Sundays, but only go to work to receive more abundance in riches. This is a clear mortal sin!

The following example on this can be seen clearer from St. Bridget's revelations, in the book rightly entitled the Book of Questions. It is composed of questions which Our Lord and Judge give wonderful answers to:

“Third question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "Why should I not exalt myself over others, seeing that I am rich?"

Answer to the third question. The Judge answered: "As to why you must not take pride in riches, I answer: The riches of the world only belong to you insofar as you need them for food and clothing. The world was made for this: that man, having sustenance for his body, might through work and humility return to me, his God, whom he scorned in his disobedience and neglected in his pride. However, if you claim that the temporal goods belong to you, I assure you that you are in effect forcibly usurping for yourself all that you possess beyond your needs. All temporal goods ought to belong to the community and be equally accessible to the needy out of charity.

You usurp for your own superfluous possession things that should be given to others out of compassion. However, many people do own much more than others but in a rational way, and they distribute it in discreet fashion. Therefore, in order not to be accused more severely at the judgment because you received more than others, it is advisable for you not to put yourself ahead of others by acting haughtily and hoarding possessions. As pleasant as it is in the world to have more temporal goods than others and to have them in abundance, it will likewise be terrible and painful beyond measure at the judgment not to have administered in reasonable fashion even licitly held goods."

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/saints/st-bridget/st-bridget-book5.php>

“The third commandment is that thou have mind and remember that thou hallow and keep holy thy Sabbath day or Sunday. That is to say, that thou shalt do no work nor operation on the Sunday or holy day, but thou shalt rest from all worldly labour and intend to prayer, and to

serve God thy maker, which rested the seventh day of the works that he made in the six days before, in which he made and ordained the world. This commandment accomplish he that keep to his power the peace of his conscience for to serve God more holily. Then this day that the Jews called Sabbath is as much to say as rest. This commandment may no man keep spiritually that is encumbered in his conscience with deadly sin, such a conscience can not be in rest nor in peace as long as he is in such a state. In the stead of the Sabbath day which was straightly kept in the old law, holy church hath established the Sunday in the new law. For our Lord arose from death to life on the Sunday, and therefore we ought to keep it holily, and be in rest from the works of the week before, and to cease of the work of sin, and to intend to do spiritual works, and to follow our Lord beseeching him of mercy and to thank him for his benefits, for they that break the Sunday and the other solemn feasts that be established to be hallowed in holy church, they sin deadly, for they do directly against the commandment of God aforesaid and holy church, but if it be for some necessity that holy church admitteth and granteth. But they sin much more then, that employ the Sunday and the feasts in sins, in lechery, in going to taverns in the service time, in gluttony and drinking drunk, and in other sins, outrages against God. For alas for sorrow I trow there is more sin committed on the Sunday and holy days and feasts than in the other work days. For then be they drunk, fight and slay, and be not occupied virtuously in God's service as they ought to do. And as God command us to remember and have in mind to keep and hallow the holy day, they that so do sin deadly and observe and keep not this third commandment." (From the Golden legend or the Lives of the Saints, volume 1, page 122-123)

From the above quote can be learned that man should not do the things on a Sunday as he would do on the other days. The Sunday is intended for God to be kept in holiness. Thus, if the only difference for you on Sundays is that you keep away from servile work, and do not give any of your time to God, what profit is there for you?

God commanded at least one day off for man so that man could rest from the world and use it for his spiritual well being, in praying, reading and doing other good works for the soul. You should thus spend the Sunday in abstaining from your own will, such as watching the tv, playing games, listening to music or the radio, etc, and instead strive to know God in solitude, prayer and meditation.

Smoking and drugs

We don't know if smoking in very small amounts once in a while is a sin. But we believe that smoking habitually or regularly is a sin, and it definitely cuts out graces from people's lives. We don't see how those who smoke habitually, for example throughout the day, would be any different from people who eat candy all day and thus try to constantly gratify themselves in that way. This is not even to get into the issue that we know it's horrible for health and leads to death. If you are smoking, you are giving a horrible example to people, tempting them to start smoking which is highly addictive and lethal. Smoking is so addictive that medical scientists have compared the addiction to Heroin addiction. Most people who get addicted to cigarettes will never be able to stop and will be life long slaves under a most filthy, evil and grace diminishing habit.

The same can be said of all addictive substances that you don't need to survive, such as: coffee, candy, chips, cookies, soda, good meats etc... If you can't abstain from these

substances for even a few days, then you are addicted to them and need to learn to abstain from them. Good days for learning to abstain from one's own desires are Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Fridays has always been a day of abstinence in the Catholic Church – since Our Lord suffered and died on that day – which means that one cannot eat anything containing meat under pain of mortal sin (there is no obligation of fast or abstinence on a holy day of obligation such as Christmas, even if it falls on a Friday). One should of course also abstain from other superfluous substances. While some substances may appear to be harmless, grace is highly diminished in people who always uses things which are superfluous.

Explaining the Laws of fast and abstinence, for days of fast and abstinence

On days of fast, only one full meal is allowed, at which meat may be taken. Two other meatless meals, which together are less than the full meal, are also permitted. Only liquids may be taken between meals. The law of fast must be observed by all between the ages of 21 and 59 inclusive

If fasting poses a serious risk to health or impedes the ability to do necessary work, it does not oblige.

There are also certain days of abstinence.

On days of complete abstinence, meat (and soup or gravy made from meat) may not be taken at all.

On days of partial abstinence, meat (and soup or gravy made from meat) can be eaten only once. The law of abstinence must be observed by everyone age 7 and older.

There is no obligation of fast or abstinence on a holy day of obligation, even if it falls on a Friday.

Eucharistic Fast

1. Priests and faithful before Mass or Holy Communion – whether it is the morning, afternoon, evening, or Midnight Mass – must abstain for three hours from solid foods and alcoholic beverages, and for one hour from non-alcoholic beverages. Water does not break the fast.

2. The infirm, even if not bedridden, may take non-alcoholic beverages and that which is really and properly medicine, either in liquid or solid form, before Mass or Holy Communion without any time limit.

Priests and faithful who are able to do so are exhorted to observe the old and venerable form of the Eucharistic fast (from foods and liquids from midnight). All those who will make use of these concessions must compensate for the good received by becoming shining examples of a Christian life and principally with works of penance and charity.

(Pope Pius XII, *Sacram Communionem*, 1957)

For a traditional Catholic calendar, please visit this site:

<http://www.mostholymonastery.com/calendar.html>
NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)

“Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power. ...And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9)

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: That you should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

What is natural family planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the practice of deliberately restricting the marital act exclusively to those times when the wife is infertile so as to avoid the conception of a child. NFP is used for the same reasons that people use artificial contraception: to deliberately avoid the conception of a child while carrying out the marital act.

Why is NFP wrong?

NFP is wrong because it's birth control; it's *against* conception. It's a refusal on the part of those who use it to be open to the children that God planned to send them. **It's no different in its purpose from artificial contraception**, and therefore it's a moral evil just like artificial contraception.

PROCREATION IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 6:23:18: “God gave us eyes not to see and desire pleasure, but to see acts to be performed for the needs of life; so too, the genital ['generating'] part of the body, as the name itself teaches, has been received by us for no other purpose than the generation of offspring.”

Saint Caesar of Arles: “AS OFTEN AS HE KNOWS HIS WIFE WITHOUT A DESIRE FOR CHILDREN...WITHOUT A DOUBT HE COMMITS SIN.” (W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of The Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2233)

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children*, 2:10:95:3: “To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature.”

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 1:19, A.D. 393: “But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother seed. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children?”

St. Augustine, *The Morals of the Manichees* 18:65, A.D. 388: “This proves that you [Manicheans] approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore, whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage and makes the woman not a wife but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion.”

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, 22:30: “For thus the eternal law, that is, the will of God creator of all creatures, taking counsel for the conservation of natural order, not to serve lust, but to see to the preservation of the race, permits the delight of mortal flesh to be released from the control of reason in copulation only to propagate progeny.”

It is a divine law, a dogma of the faith (*de fide*), that the primary end of marriage is procreation (child bearing) and the education of children. Pope Pius XI decrees it “is beyond the power of any human law” to teach otherwise.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, December 31, 1930: To take away from man the natural and primeval right of marriage, to circumscribe in any way the principal ends of marriage laid down in the beginning by God Himself in the words “Increase and multiply,” is beyond the power of any human law. ... This is also expressed succinctly in the Code of Canon Law “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children”.

1917 Code of Canon Law: Canon 1013. The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children.

A Practical Commentary, on Canon 1013: There can be no controversy over the primary object of marriage. The perpetuation of the human race is willed by the Creator, who from the creation of mankind appointed the means for this purpose, ... The Holy Office condemned the opinion defended by some recent authors who deny that the procreation of children is the primary end of matrimony, and regard its secondary ends not subordinate to its primary end but independent of it (April 1, 1944; *Acta Ap. Sedis*, XXXVI, 103.).

Therefore, it is heresy to teach that procreation and education of children is not the only primary end of marriage. Any deliberate plan by man to frustrate the marital act by attempting to make conception impossible is a mortal sin against this primary purpose of marriage. It's quite clear that the new teaching of NFP is modernistic heresy condemned by the earlier Church, Popes, Saints and the infallible word of God! Will you be a modernist and follow the herd of sheep in fleshly lust instead of following the purity and holiness of God and his Church? If yes, then the fire of Hell will be your home for all eternity!

CONTRACEPTION IS INFALLIBLY CONDEMNED BY POPE PIUS XI

A pope can teach infallibly, not just in matters of faith, but also in matters of morals.

Vatican Council, 1870: Sess. IV, cap. 4, Definition of infallibility: “The Roman pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA... when... he defines a doctrine concerning faith or **morals** to be held by the whole Church.”

On December 30, 1930, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, engaged his charism of infallibility and condemned all forms of contraception.

Pope Pius XI, Casti Connubii, 1930: Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime, and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes, "Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it". Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition, some recently have adjudged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, **the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and the purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims** anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and **those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.**

These sentences fulfill the conditions of an infallible teaching regarding a doctrine of morals. The pope is addressing the Universal Church, “the Catholic Church.” He makes it clear he is proclaiming a truth, “Our mouth proclaims.” The topic deals with morals, “the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and the purity of morals.” And lastly, he binds Catholics to this teaching under pain of grave sin, “those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.”

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING IS CONTRACEPTION

“Natural Family Planning” is also known as “The Rhythm Method.” Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, condemns all forms of contraception as immoral, as an “offense against the law of God and of nature, and as a grave (mortal) sin.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due the offspring, which many have the audacity to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent) but by frustrating the marriage act. ...No reason, however grave, may be put forward by anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed

which is shameful and intrinsically vicious ... any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God.

A key word is “deliberate” attempt to prevent conception. Pope Pius XI teaches all forms of deliberately frustrating the marital act by depriving it of its natural power and purpose (conception) is a “sin against nature” (the natural law) and is “intrinsically vicious” (intrinsically evil). He does not qualify deliberate frustration by saying, only if physical devices are used during the act, or by withdrawal during the act. Birth control pills are taken before and not during the act to frustrate the fertile cycle of the woman by making it infertile. Natural Family Planning (hereafter referred to as NFP), which is absolutely unnatural and immoral, uses the same prevention technique as birth control pills. The difference being that birth control pills are replaced with modern scientific techniques that chart the fertile and infertile period. In every case the goal is the exact same, to prevent conception from taking place while engaging in the marital act. Spouses that practice NFP chart the woman’s fertile and infertile period in order that they can prevent conception by only having marital relations during the infertile period. Deliberate frustration of conception occurs either by obstructing the fertile cycle by NFP or birth control pills, or by using a physical device, or withdrawal during the marital act.

IN EVERY CASE A DELIBERATE PLAN IS MADE BEFORE THE ACT

Married couples that attempt to frustrate conception while engaging in the marital act must formulate a deliberate plan in order to do so. In every case they deliberately formulate a plan to prevent conception before the marital act. They either plan to use physical contraceptive devices during the act, or plan to withdraw during the act, or plan to take birth control pills that prevent ovulation before the act, or plan to only have relations during the infertile period. In every case the goal of the plan is the same, to prevent conception when engaging in the marital act. Whether they plan by buying the physical contraceptive devices or pills ahead of time, or the husband plans to withdraw at the appropriate time, or they plan by charting fertile and infertile periods, it is exactly the same plan. In every case they plan to prevent conception when engaging in the marital act. In a sense it could be said about NFP that a contraceptive is placed over the fertile period while engaging in the act during the infertile period, or, the husband withdraws from the act during the fertile period while engaging in it during the infertile period, or, instead of preventing ovulation with a pill, it is prevented by charting cycles. Dear reader, open your eyes and ears, can you not see that the intention is the same in every case! Can you not see that NFP is contraception!

It is intrinsically evil when spouses plan to have sexual relations while also having planned to make conception impossible. It does not matter in what way the spouses plan to prevent conception. The principle is the same in all cases—the deliberate prevention of conception (child bearing) by the spouses while engaging in the marital act. The goal of contraception is to eliminate the possibility of conception while engaging in the marital act. Contraception takes place during the act by physical obstruction, or before the act by obstructing the fertile period by planning to only commit the act during the infertile period. In both cases the goal of the plan is to perform the sexual act without the possibility of conception. Guilt of mortal sin occurs when these two conditions are met, either in the mind or in the act. Our Lord teaches

us that all sin proceeds from the heart, and manifests itself in men's actions. "*The things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.*" (Mt. 15:11, 18-19)

What is a plan? A plan is the words of a man that proceed from his mouth that come forth from his heart that he seeks to put into action. The root of every plan is in the heart. What is in the heart of spouses who plan to use physical contraceptive devices during the marital act, or plan to withdraw so as to make conception improbable, or plan to have marital relations only during the infertile period? In the heart of these spouses is the desire to have marital relations while having deliberately planned to prevent conception. Pope Pius XI describes what is in their heart, he says, "Offspring... they say is to be carefully avoided by married people... by frustrating the marriage act... [They] deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose." Sin originates from what is in the heart. I ask spouses who practice NFP, "What is in your heart when you practice NFP?" While engaging in the marital act, after having planned to do so only during the infertile period, ask yourself in the heat of your lust, "Am I not committing this very act with the explicit, deliberate, premeditated planned intention of preventing conception while fulfilling my lust?" If your wish or prayer is to have relations and that conception does not occur, then you committed the mortal sin of contraception.

St. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:15:17 [A.D. 419]: "I am supposing, then, although are not lying [with your wife] for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed. Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name cover a shame. Sometimes this lustful cruelty, or cruel lust, comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility... Assuredly if both husband and wife are like this, they are not married, and if they were like this from the beginning they come together not joined in matrimony but in seduction. If both are not like this, I dare to say that either the wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife."

NFP IS A TRADITION OF MEN THAT REPLACES THE LAW OF GOD

NFP is simply a tradition of men. It has eliminated the commandment of God that forbids contraception, by making it seem that NFP is not contraception simply because physical devices or techniques are not used during the marital act. They ignore the very heart of this commandment of God by violating it in a most deceptive manner. The ancestors of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned, the apostate Jews and their false religion of Apostate Judaism as practiced by the Talmudic Jews, have carried on these traditions of men to ridiculous and absurd proportions. One such teaching is that it is only murder if one directly kills another, such as by stabbing, shooting, or choking, etc. They teach it is not murder if one locks a man in a room with no food or water and does not give him any. In this case, they teach, the man dies from thirst and starvation, and not by the hands of any man; thus no murder was committed. This is a perfect parallel to NFP. The tradition of men teaches that as long as a physical device or technique is not used during the marital act, the planning ahead of time by charting cycles to prevent conception is not a crime.

HONORABLE CONTINENCE

The only time conception can legally be deferred is if the spouses agree to live chaste for a period of time. They must abstain altogether from the marital act, during the infertile periods as well as the fertile periods. This is referred to by Pope Pius XI as virtuous continence.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, IV. Vices Opposed To Christian Marriage: “And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due the offspring, which many have the audacity to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence but by frustrating the marriage act.”

The sin of contraception is incurred when two conditions are met, the planning to engage in the marital act while also having planned to prevent conception.

Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons* 1:12 [A.D. 522]: “Who is he who cannot warn that no woman may take a potion so that she is unable to conceive or condemns in herself the nature which God willed to be fecund? As often as she could have conceived or given birth, of that many homicides she will be held guilty, and, unless she undergoes suitable penance, she will be damned by eternal death in hell. If a woman does not wish to have children, let her enter into a religious agreement with her husband; for chastity is the sole sterility of a Christian woman.”

MEDICAL CONDITION, DANGER TO THE MOTHER OR CHILD, DOES NOT EXCUSE

Honorable continence can also be practiced if the wife has a medical condition in which pregnancy would endanger her life. If they decide to have relations, they must do so with the intention of child bearing and be prepared to risk the life of the mother. The same can be said if you are barren. If you have marital relations with the intention of procreation as did Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and not merely for lust, God may very well open your womb.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: “As to the ‘medical and therapeutic indication’ to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless, what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: “Thou shalt not kill”. The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it... Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing.”

If the wife’s life is threatened by child bearing, then either the marital act is abstained from

altogether by honorable continence, or it is done with the hope of conception, being ready to bear the consequences of the death of the mother.

THE EVIL FRUITS OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING IS THE LACK OF TRUE FAITH IN GOD

St. Paul, in his epistles to the Romans, and St. Timothy, speaks of the great loss of faith during the Great Apostasy and the accompanying evil fruits (sins of immorality).

“Know also this, that in the last days, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, Without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasure more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.” (2Tim. 3:1-5)

This is an exact description of modern men in these final days. The root of the whole problem that leads to sinful practices like contraception is the loss of the Catholic faith. This is known as the Romans One Curse. “*And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient.*” (Rom. 1:28) Fallen-away Catholics say they believe in God with their lips and continue with outward actions of worship. They have an appearance of godliness, but in their hearts deny God by denying His power thereof and making their worship vain. “*Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men.*” (Mk. 7:6-7) Fallen-away Catholics teach precepts of men, such as NFP, and not of God, making their worship vain.

Once faith is lost, sin abounds and spirals out-of-control producing the resultant evil fruits. “Augustine was wont to say ‘When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin.’” Sin spirals out-of-control because there is no remedy for it while the offenders are outside the Catholic Church due to their loss of the faith. A Catholic who is in mortal sin has hope, because he can go to confession to have his sins forgiven. A Catholic who loses the faith is no longer Catholic and thus he cannot go to confession to have his sins forgiven. If he did go to confession it would be to no avail, and a sacrilege, until he first enters the Church by conversion and abjuration of his heresies or schisms. A Catholic has the whole Church praying for him as one of Her members as a top priority, and thus he has great privileges and special graces available to him that non-Catholics do not have access to.

ABORTION IS THE RESULT OF FAILED CONTRACEPTIVE PRACTICES

All sin produces evil fruit according to its quality and quantity. What are the fruits of NFP? They are very evil fruits indeed, small families, unbridled lust, selfishness, materialism, greed, discord, contentions, disobedience in all ranks, alcoholism, drug addiction, also abortion, which is a direct result of failed contraceptive practices.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: All of which agrees with the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo in denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and failing in this, are not ashamed to put their children to death: “Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails, the foetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices, they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification”.

If the plan to prevent conception fails, then abortion, the murder of the infant in the womb of the mother, is the solution. This is the great cost men pay to fulfill their unbridled sinful lust. Unbridled lust shows its ugly head in many ways; by sexual abuse of all sorts from harassment to rape, to the carrying out of the act with family members (incest) and others; by viewing pornography; in their children who cannot control their lusts because they were conceived primarily in lust and raised in lust. Greed manifests itself because of the selfish nature that leads spouses to practice contraception. Objects and things that bring them momentary pleasure are more important to them than people, more important than having children. The children they do have are only sentimental ornaments that lend their perverted marriage an air of acceptance. They have no true love or care for their children, because the parents are lovers of themselves more than God. They are more interested in what brings them momentary pleasure. What they do not realize is that true pleasure and peace only comes from obeying all of God’s commandments and raising godly children if God wills they should have children. Parents sit their children in front of a Television to baby-sit them, while the parents fulfill, or work to fulfill, their own selfish interests. They drop off their children at day care centers for strangers to care for them. Can you imagine if our Blessed Mother Mary, after having received the greatest gift that any man can ever receive, the infant Jesus, God and Man, dropped Him off with godless strangers to care for Him. Parents, due to their selfish, materialistic, and covetous nature, have shirked their duty to bring children into the world and then educate and train them to be godly—as faithful and obedient Catholics, so that they may have a hope to save their souls.

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 28:5, A.D. 391: “The having of children, they esteem grievous and unwelcome. Many at least with this view have even paid money to be childless, and have mutilated nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 24, A.D. 391: “Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit, where there are medicines of sterility, where there is murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. ...Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and fight with his laws? ...Yet such turpitude . . . the matter still seems indifferent to many men—even to many men having wives. In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. Against her are these innumerable tricks.”

LACK OF FAITH THAT GOD CAN REGULATE, FEED, CLOTHE, AND PROTECT FAMILIES

Fallen-away Catholics exhibit their loss of the Catholic faith by a lack of faith in the God whom they profess to believe in. How does this lack of faith in God exhibit itself with those who practice contraception? They deny God's power to open and close wombs, to feed, shelter, and provide for all the other necessities of their families. Many verbally profess belief in miracles, while in their hearts they do not really believe. Many do not even profess belief in miracles.

MUST ALWAYS HOPE CONCEPTION OCCURS, EVEN IF HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE

If God wills for a couple to have none, few, or many children, He will regulate conception during the marital act so that it will be so. Dear reader, do you believe that? Do you really believe? Prove it by condemning contraception and never practice it again. Always desire and hope that conception should take place during every marital act, even if by a miracle. Do not take the place of God. Let God regulate whether or not conception occurs during your marital act.

GOD FEEDS THE BIRDS WHICH NEITHER REAP NOR SOW

“And he will love thee and multiply thee, and will bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy vintage, thy oil, and thy herds, and the flocks of thy sheep upon the land, for which he swore to thy fathers that he would give it thee.” (Deut. 7:13)

The word of God condemns anyone who attempts to excuse the mortal sin of contraception for any reason, one being economic. Those who use the economic excuse faithlessly say that if they have too many children they will not be able to feed or clothe them, or provide their other necessities. These fallen-away Catholics do not really believe in the word and power of God.

“Therefore I say to you: Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat: and the body is more than the raiment. Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much are you more valuable than they? ...Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now, if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven: how much more you, O ye of little faith? ...seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Lk. 12:22-24, 27-28, 31)

Dear reader, you will either truly believe in the word of God or not. It does no good to say you believe while your actions prove otherwise. “*Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*” (1Jn. 3:18) Your professed faith is tested when it comes time to put it into action. “*Faith without works is dead.*” (Ja. 2:20) *Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*” (Ja. 1:22) Only those are blessed who hear the word of God and keep it. “*Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.*” (Lk. 11:28) Do you really believe God can feed, clothe, and shelter your family no matter how big it is?

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 6:20 A.D. 307: “[Some] complain of the scantiness of their means, and allege that they have not enough for bringing up more children, as though, in truth, their means were in [their] power . . . or God did not daily make the rich poor and the poor rich. Wherefore, if any one on any account of poverty shall be unable to bring up children, it is better to abstain from relations with his wife.”

Woe to faithless fallen-away Catholics who say they cannot feed their families due to difficult economic conditions, implying God cannot provide for them. Nothing is impossible with God.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: “We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children. However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the Grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: “Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe. God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you”.

FAMINE, PLAGUE, WAR, EXILE, AND DEATH ARE NOT DUE TO BIG FAMILIES

If you cannot feed your family it is not because of the size of your family. If God is not shunned by the deliberate prevention of conception, then God will certainly provide for the family. God will make available all its necessities, provided the family does not incur God's wrath for other reasons, or if God sees they should die as persecuted martyrs. To suffer persecution for God, such as martyrdom by starvation, is the greatest provision God can give, by providing the soul with immediate entry into Heaven as a saint. Famine, plague, all sorts of calamity, or martyrdom that befalls families is not due to the number of children, but because of disobedience or obedience to God. When God strikes a land with famine, or similar conditions that make it impossible for families to sustain themselves, they all die, no matter how small or large their families are. The punishment is not due to the size of the family. When God allows persecution and martyrdom to come upon His faithful chosen, to test their faith and to witness to unbelievers, they die in obedience to God. Their death has nothing whatsoever to do with the number of children they have. God has demonstrated many times how He protects His faithful while at the same time sending famine and death to obstinate evildoers.

WHAT THEY FEAR COMES UPON THEM IN UNKNOWN WAYS

“*That which the wicked feareth, shall come upon him.*” (Prov. 10:24) When spouses deliberately plan to prevent conception, taking the place of God, God abandons them and their families. Many times people cry out to God for help when they are in dire straights. When all is well they disobey or ignore Him. If they should appeal to God in a time of need, God says

to them, “You abandoned Me by following your own sinful ways, now provide for your needs yourselves!”

“You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my rephensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: when tribulation and distress shall come upon you: Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me: Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, Nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices. (Proverbs. 1:25-31)

THEY WORK HARDER AND ARE NOT AT PEACE

Spouses who use contraception to limit the number of children actually increase their burden instead of lessening it. It does not matter if they have small or large families. Even spouses that have large families who then decide to use contraception fall under the same curse from God as those who use contraception and have small families. What the faithless do not see is that God punishes them by making them work much harder than they would if they did not use contraception. They work harder as a result of their sins, which are selfish in nature. All the work they do is for carnal purposes, to support and maintain a gluttonous and extravagant lifestyle, at least that is their goal even if they have not achieved it to their satisfaction. In reality gluttons and materialistic men are never satisfied no matter how much they have, thus they are disquieted most of the time and in many ways. “*The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity: he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up. (Ecclus. 14:9) There is no peace to the wicked*” (Isa. 57:21) The sin of materialism they are afflicted with causes them to covetously desire fancy homes with all the modern conveniences and gadgets, fancy new cars, two vacations or more a year, etc. All this has caused them to work harder than if they had a larger unplanned family and lived frugally. How often do we hear them say, I have all these things but no time to enjoy them? They run around like chickens with their heads cut off, every which way, busy about much, with no time to contemplate on what is really important. One of Satan’s main ploys is to keep men so busy that they cannot think about God. Remember Satan’s ploy against the Israelites. Satan, speaking through Pharaoh, increased the workload of the Israelites so they would not have time to worship God.

“Moses and Aaron went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may sacrifice to me in the desert... The king of Egypt said to them: Why do you Moses and Aaron draw off the people from their works? Get you gone to your burdens.... Therefore he commanded the same day the overseers of the works, and the task-masters of the people, saying: You shall give straw no more to the people to make brick, as before; but let them go and gather straw. And you shall lay upon them the task of bricks, which they did before; neither shall you diminish any thing thereof, for they are idle, and therefore they cry, saying: Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let them be oppressed with works, and let them fulfill them.” (Ex. 5: 1. 4,6-9)

If men do not have proper time to think about God, not just a fleeting thought, they have no

hope of finding Him. Just look around any city and you will see people running hither-thither going about at a mad pace with barely enough time to say hello to anyone. You do not see people talking with one another at leisure anymore on street corners or in parks. *“Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly.”* (Lk. 21:34-36) It is only when people soberly think, contemplate, talk, and seek that there can be any hope for them to find God. This is not a guarantee that they will find God, but without it there is no hope at all. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is: and is a rewarder to them that seek him.”* (Heb. 11:6) *Seek and you shall find.”* (Mt. 7:7) Those who seek with a true and unfeigned heart will find, because they are the elect who are of good will.

Parents do not even have time to spend with their own children, thus they invented the worldly evil slogan, “Quality time over quantity.” This is another tradition of men that has done away with God’s commandment to raise and educate godly children. Parents imagine they can spend around one hour a day with their children, heaping on them a false, mushy love, many times bribing them by giving them what ever they want and then ignore them the other 23 hours. If the infant needs his diaper changed outside the quality time limit, then he must sit in his mess until his scheduled visit from his mom, or she could get someone else to do her duty. Children need 24-hour care, not just one, two, three, or twelve hours a day. Raising godly children is a full time job. It means cooking, cleaning, teaching, and vigilance every hour of every day of every year. Yes, it is a duty, and woe to those who shirk it. For surely as God is the God of the Holy Catholic Church, He will abandon you also, just as you have abandoned your own children. He will let you sit in the mess of your own sins. If the father and mother have done their duty well, let them say in all humility, *“We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.”* (Lk. 17:10) In other words, do not pat yourselves on the back, for you have only done what you must do if you want a hope to be saved and enter Heaven. If you truly loved yourself, spouse, and children, you would first and foremost do whatever you must to procure eternal salvation for you and them.

THE EVIL FRUIT OF DISOBEDIENCE

Even when parents and children are home and at rest they sit in front of the Television and get brainwashed. Perverted families look at perverted shows about perverted families, while not even talking with their own family members. They live through the perverted families they see on TV and imitate them. They turn fantasy into reality, thus their lives have become nightmares. They have become robots with no true personalities, who are programmed to sin without the least pang of conscience. God, indeed, punishes these perverted families by the natural consequences of their sins. *“By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented.”* (Wis. 11:17) One of these punishments is disobedient wives and children. Thus you have families in which the natural order of hierarchal submission is turned upside down and the resultant discord that follows.

“As for my people, their oppressors have stripped them, and women have ruled over them... I will give children to be their princes, and the effeminate shall rule over them... And the people shall rush one upon another, and every man against his neighbor: the child shall make a tumult against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.” (Isaiah 3:12, 4-5) And the

brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against their parents and shall work their death.” (Mark 13:12)

When wives disobey their husbands and children rise up against their parents, husbands and parents act surprised! But by what right do they have to complain? Have they not fostered rebellion in their homes? Because they have rebelled against God, fallen-away Catholics being the worst of all, rebellion is in the midst of them. “*Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey.*” (1Ki. 15:23) Because they would not obey God, obedience is not rendered to them when it is due. Where does it all end? It ends in most cases, in adultery, separation, or divorce and sinful second unions that are not marriages. In other cases it maintains an illusion of a marriage and family, in which the spouses and children are alienated from one another, each going about their own selfish interests. These perverted families are cold and sterile with happy-faces pasted in front of their true faces; their true faces of greed, selfishness, pride, envy, hopelessness, despair, melancholy, boredom, restlessness, the root being hatred toward the true God. There is only one remedy, come to God with your whole heart and soul by becoming Catholic in word and deed before it is too late.

Pope Pius XI, *Ingravescentibus Malis*, On the Rosary, 1937: 1. There is no remedy for the ever-growing evils of our times except a return to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to His most holy precepts. Truly, only He “hath the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6: 69), and individuals and society can only fall into immediate and miserable ruin if they ignore the majesty of God and repudiate His Law.

St. Pope Pius X, *Communium Rerum*, 1909: More bitter shall be the consequences of these threats when the vices of society are being multiplied, when the sin of rulers and of the people consists especially in the exclusion of God and in rebellion against the Church of Christ: that double social apostasy which is the deplorable fount of anarchy, corruption, and endless misery for the individual and for society.

POPE PIUS XI CONDEMNS ALL EXCUSES

The Church’s infallible teachings on faith and morals admit to no exceptions. There can be no excuses to violate these laws. The word of God, as infallibly taught by His Catholic Church, condemns all acts of contraception as intrinsically evil. Therefore, there can be no excuse for engaging in the marital act while having planned to prevent conception. Pope Pius XI makes specific mention of some of the common excuses put forward by those who practice contraception and condemns them.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due the offspring, which many have the audacity to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people... by frustrating the marriage act. Some justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties, whether on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances. But, **no reason, however grave, may be put forward by anything intrinsically against nature may become**

conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

Pope Pius XI teaches, “no reason, however grave, may be put forward by anything intrinsically against nature,” which means not even the death of the mother can be prevented at the cost of killing the child or visa-versa

One of the grave reasons brought forward by NFP defenders to justify its use is extreme poverty. Yet, Pope Pius XI specifically condemns this along with all reasons.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children. However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the Grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: “Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe. God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.”

Pope Pius XI clearly teaches that spouses who do not desire conception takes place during the conjugal act because of poverty have no faith in God to provide for them and regulate the size of their family and have also committed a mortal sin, an intrinsically evil act, which brings down the calamitous wrath of God upon them.

THE SIN OF ENFLAMING CONCUPISCENCE

“That... you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.” (2 Pt. 1:4)

Various Errors on Moral Subjects, Condemned in a decree of the Holy Office, March 4, 1679: “THE ACT OF MARRIAGE EXERCISED FOR PLEASURE ONLY IS ENTIRELY FREE OF ALL FAULT AND VENIAL DEFECT.” (Denz. 1159) **-Condemned by Pope Innocent XI.**

The Catholic Church teaches that the marital act cannot be used to enflame concupiscence. If the marital act is used to enflame concupiscence, then sin is committed. The goal of a godly couple’s marital relations is to put out the fire of lust by committing the act with a sense of shame and acknowledgement of the weakness of the flesh. The goal of enflaming concupiscence is to ignite the fire to greater levels, higher excitement, exalting the flesh while suppressing shame and the weakness of the flesh. Examples of things a couple can do to enflame concupiscence are to have marital relations in light instead of in darkness or that they indulge in foreplay or that they expose more skin that is absolutely necessary for the marital

act to be completed. The enflaming of concupiscence usually starts out as a venial sin and if continued always ends in mortal sin, because all control is lost. *“Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will.”* (Ecclus. 18:30)

If spouses do not work toward perfection by trying to eliminate concupiscence, then, when one dies, the other is very susceptible to committing mortal sin by illicitly quelling concupiscence. When I told a married man that NFP is a mortal sin, he said that this couldn't be true because he cannot control his lust and he cannot afford to have any more children; therefore, he had to practice NFP. He mocks and denies God's grace by saying he cannot control his lust, and he has no true faith in God who feeds the birds who neither reap nor sow nor gather into barns. Jesus Christ is the divine physician and healer who can cure any and all faults and sinful conditions. I asked him, “If you cannot control your lust now, what would you do if your wife dies tomorrow?” “How would you fulfill your lust then?” If, as he said, he cannot control his lust, he would commit mortal sin by finding a way to fulfill his lust one way or another.

PATH TO PURITY AND PERFECTION

Dear reader, you should now be able to see clearly that whosoever comes together in the marital act for fleshly lust over them the devil has power. St. Raphael the Archangel, one of the seven archangels that stand before God's throne, teaches what God's will is for spouses in the use of the marital act:

“Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power. ...And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” (Tob. 6:16-17, 22; 8:9)

The only purpose spouses should engage in the marital act is for the “love of posterity” (children), not for lust. No, St. Raphael says, spouses should come together “only for the love of posterity.” Spouses who come together to gratify fleshly lust, over them Satan has power.

The goal of every true Catholic is to be a saint. That means they must strive to be perfect and holy as God is perfect and holy. *“Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.”* (Mt. 5:48) *It is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* (1Pt. 1:16)

There are some fundamental rules that all spouses need to learn in order to have a happy marriage. First, you should always pray the Rosary together or individually before the time you intend to have marital relations, and beg God on your knees that he will grant you children for the honor of His Holy name. Second, you should pray to God that none of you will sin in thought or deed while the marital act is being done. Third, you should always remember that God is present with you when you are doing the marital act. This will hinder

you from searching to enflame your lust. Fourth, you should always have darkness in the room in order that you may not enflame concupiscence. Fifth, you should always expose as little flesh as possible during the marital relations. The way to perfection, regarding the marital act, is that spouses only perform the marital act with the sole intention and hope to bearing children. That means spouses are to be chaste during the monthly infertile period of the woman. We read in the Old Testament that God had forbid the marital act during the infertile monthly cycle of the woman and when she is pregnant. *“The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.”* (Lev. 15:19) Haydock Commentary: *“Days, not only out of the camp, but from the company of men. As soon as a woman shows signs of pregnancy, intercourse would cease until the birth of the child. “Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers [ed. pregnancy]: neither shalt thou uncover her nakedness.”* (Lev. 18:19) Haydock Commentary: *“Saint Augustine believes that this law is still in force. [On Lev. 20:18] This intemperance was by a positive law declared a mortal offence of the Jews.”* Another instance of divine condemnation of marital relations during pregnancy is found in The Revelations of St. Bridget Book 10 or appendix. St. Bridget asks a man that is now in purgatory about the specific reasons why he escaped eternal hell. This is the third reason why he escaped hell: *“The third [reason] is that I obeyed my teacher who advised me to abstain from my wife’s bed when I understood that she was pregnant.”* Thus, it is perfectly clear that those who have marital relations when they know about the pregnancy is sinning against God and the natural law, for the woman cannot become pregnant again, and their sole motive is then to satisfy their unbridled lusts.

See also in The Revelations of St. Bridget Book 1, Chapter 26 for a condemnation of NFP advocates by Christ. [Click here!](#)

If one of the spouse’s is barren, the act can still be performed with the hope that God will grant a miracle of conception. In this path to perfection, the lustful aspect, the momentary pleasure of the flesh is fought against, conquered, and thus utterly despised. *“Flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.”* (2Pt. 1:4) To say that this cannot be achieved is to deny the power of God and His grace. *“Being confident of this very thing: that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 1:6) The weapons of the Catholic faith: grace, persevering prayer, sacrifice, mortification, and penance are more than sufficient to conquer any sin, or sinful inclination, or fault.

We read the following in The Golden Legend or The Lives of The Saints.

“I have seen thy shame (St. Joachim) and heard the reproach. That thou art barren is to thee no reproach by right, and God is venger of sin and not of nature. And when he closeth the belly or womb, he worketh so that he openeth it after, more marvellously. And the fruit that shall be born shall not be seen to come forth by lechery, but that it be known that it is of the gift of God. The first mother of your people was Sara, and she was barren unto the ninetieth year, and had only Isaac, to whom the benediction of all people was promised. And was not Rachel long barren? And yet had she not after Joseph, that held all the seigniory of Egypt? which was more strong than Samson, and more holy than Samuel? And yet were their mothers barren. Thus mayst thou believe by reason and by ensample that the childings long abiden be wont to be more marvellous. And therefore Anne thy wife shall have a daughter, and thou shalt call her Mary (Blessed Virgin Mary), and she, as ye have avowed, shall be from her infancy sacred unto our Lord, and shall be full of the Holy Ghost...” (From The Golden

Legend or The Lives of The Saints, Vol 5, p. 59.)

There is no guarantee that God ever grants barren couples children. God may want you to remain childless, and then you have to accept this fact. God may want you to remain childless for the fact that he knows you will serve him more devotedly by it. We can read examples of this from the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth. We can also read many other examples from the Bible as well of God granting barren couples Holy children first after they made vow of raising the child holy in the service of God. God may want you to use your time and effort in giving birth to spiritual children which is far greater than to give birth to fleshly children.

“These two, Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, were just tofore our Lord, living in all the justifications, and holding all the commandments of the law without murmur ne complaint, praising and thanking our Lord God. They had no children, for the holy woman was barren. They had great desire to have a son that might be bishop of the law by succession of lineage after Zacharias, and hereof had they in their youth prayed much to our Lord, but when it pleased not unto our Lord, they took it a worth and thanked God of all. They served the more devoutly our Lord God, for they had no charge but only to serve and entend unto him. Many there be that withdraw them from the service and love of our Lord for the love of their children.”

PEOPLE KNOW THAT NFP IS A SIN

Below are a few very interesting testimonies from people who have either used NFP or were taught NFP. Their comments have been taken from “the letters to the editor” section of a publication which carried an article on NFP. (Their names were given in the original letter.) Their letters demonstrate that the women who use NFP, as well as the men who tolerate or cooperate with it, are convicted of its sinfulness by the natural law written on their hearts. Those who use NFP know that they are thwarting the will of God and practicing contraception.

Dear Editor... I am a mother to seven children and can share my own experiences. NFP did NOT bring my marriage closer. I struggled with reconciling myself to the fact that scripture states a husband and wife should be submissive and not separate unless for prayer. We were avoiding pregnancy.....plain and simple. There can be nothing spiritual about telling your spouse that you can't participate in the marital embrace for fear of a child being conceived. Webster's dictionary defines contraception as: "deliberate prevention of conception or impregnation". Systematically charting and watching out for those fertile days is the deliberate prevention of conception. I know friends who use it. I've talked to them in a very personal way. They do not want any more children. They are using NFP as birth control, which it is. And one friend has been using it for 11 years and "hasn't had any accidents." ... I can say that St. Augustine was right on target when he wrote in The Morals of the Manichees: *"Marriage, as the marriage tablets themselves proclaim, joins male and female for the procreation of children. Whoever says that to procreate children is a worse sin than to copulate thereby prohibits the purpose of marriage; and he makes the woman no more a wife than a harlot, who, when she has been given certain gifts, is joined to a man to satisfy his lust. If there is a wife, there is matrimony. But there is no matrimony where motherhood is prevented, for then there is no wife."*... My favorite comment recently was made by another

author comparing NFP to a farmer who plants his corn in the dead of winter so as to avoid a plentiful harvest.”

Dear Editor... Let me put the NFP debate simply: if it is your intention to avoid having children it really doesn't matter what method you use. You've already committed the sin. If, however, you use contraception as your method of choice, you add to the first sin a second one. As to the oft-repeated mantra of "grave reasons", allow me to say this: name one. Look deep into your heart and name one that is really, truly grave... We did the NFP bit for awhile... and have felt revulsion over it ever since. During that time we might have had at least two more children.”

To the Editor: NFP is one of the chief infiltrations of the new-age sex cult into the Church, along with sex-ed and immodest dress... As modern Catholics have been conditioned to embrace mutually contradictory ideas while defending them as consonant, they have been easily deceived by the notion that NFP, as commonly practiced, is somehow different from birth control. I have no training in moral theology, but even I know that the goal of an action determines its substance. When a couple engages in deliberately sterile relations, this is known as birth control, plain and simple. “

PLANNED PARENTHOOD AND NFP OF THE SAME CLOTH

Have you noticed the similarities between Planned Parenthood (the world's largest abortion provider) and Natural Family Planning? Artificial contraceptives and abortifacients are found under store aisles marked “Family Planning.” Like abortionists, family planners consider children as something undesirable, at least temporarily; whereas the true faithful have always considered them as an undeniable blessing from God Himself, planned by His providence from all eternity. “Behold, children are the inheritance of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward... Blessed is the man whose desire is filled with them; he shall not be confounded” (Psalm 126:3,5).

In publications promoting NFP, the fertile period of the wife is sometimes classified as “not safe” and “dangerous,” as though generating new life were considered a serious breach of national security and a little infant a treacherous criminal. This is truly abominable.

VATICAN II AND PAUL VI PROMOTES SINFUL BIRTH CONTROL

Antipope Paul VI explained correctly that NFP is birth control when he promoted it in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

Antipope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (# 16), July 25, 1968:

“...married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse **only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth** in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.”

To learn what really happened with the Catholic Church after the Vatican II revolution, please

consult these pages,

<http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com/>

http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com/VaticanII_mainpage.php

http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com/VaticanII_Church_Exposed.php

THE ORIGIN OF FLESHLY LUST

From whence comes this fleshly lust, this momentary pleasure to the flesh? It came after Adam and Eve committed the original sin.

St. Augustine, City of God, Book XIV, Chapter 12: "...lust, which only afterwards sprung up as the penal consequence of [original] sin, the iniquity of violating it was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it might have been kept."

God had originally created the sexual act between man and woman to be no more pleasing to the flesh than a handshake and childbirth was not to be painful. The emphasis on the flesh, both the momentary pleasure during the act and pain during childbirth, are effects of Adam and Eve's original sin. After Adam and Eve committed original sin, they covered their private parts indicating a violation had occurred in this area not intended by God. This quick, momentary pleasure during the sexual act placed the excitation of the flesh at the center of attention instead of the true cause, which is the procreation of a child. Satan always promises a quick thrill while death lies underneath. This strange sensation that Adam and Eve experienced, this momentary pleasure of the flesh, was at the same time very shameful, something alien to them, to which they sensed a loss of control over their bodies. It is a misplaced and inordinate pleasure. Circumcision, which brings pain where a pleasure never belonged, is a sign that God reclaimed dominion over those that faithfully bore it, so that the devil may not tempt them with lust.

The pleasure of the marital act was to be purely spiritual, the joy of bringing a godly child into the world who can be loved and return love, who would be a source of joy, comfort, and aid. The whole focus of attention during the marital act was to be solely the joy of bringing a godly child into their family and the world. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, the deep, spiritual love of bringing a soul, a human being, into the world had to compete with the pleasure of the flesh. It is a misplaced and inordinate pleasure that distracts from the intention of the marital act and is selfish in nature. Selfish, because gratification of the flesh had entered a realm where it does not belong. The motive of bringing a child into the world had to compete with the motive of self-gratification of the flesh. Spouses who allow the motive of self-gratification (fleshly lust) to usurp the motive of bringing a child into the world will be infected with the sin of self-love. They will not be able to truly love God, their children, or even themselves. *"Men shall be... lovers of pleasure more than of God."* (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

More on this point can be read in the following words from our Lord in St. Bridget's Revelations: "But now, my bride, for whose sake all these things are being said and shown, you might ask, how children would have been born by them if they had not sinned? I shall

answer you: In truth, by the love of God and the mutual devotion and union of the flesh wherein they both would have been set on fire internally, love's blood would have sown its seed in the woman's body without any shameful lust, and so the woman would have become fertile. Once the child was conceived without sin and lustful desire, I would have sent a soul into the child from my Divinity, and the woman would have carried the child and given birth to it without pain. When the child was born, it would have been perfect like Adam when he was first created. But this honor was despised by man when he obeyed the devil and coveted a greater honor than I had given to him. After the disobedience was enacted, my angel came over them and they were ashamed over their nakedness, and they immediately experienced the lust and desire of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. Then they also lost me, for when they had me, they did not feel any hunger or sinful fleshly lust or shame, but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight.

But when the devil rejoiced over their perdition and fall, I was moved with compassion for them and did not abandon them but showed them a threefold mercy: I clothed them when they were naked and gave them bread from the earth. And for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their disobedience, I gave and created souls in their seed through my Divinity. And all the evil the devil tempted them with, I turned to good for them entirely." (Jesus Christ, The Son of God, speaking in an excerpt from the Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 1, Chapter 26)

Not all pleasures are evil. To say so is heresy. God created good and pleasurable things that redound to His glory and greatness and proves His love and care for His creatures. A pleasure can be good or bad. A bad pleasure is one that always brings with it slavery to self and others. Thus, God always forbids a bad pleasure. Some bad pleasures are sexual lust, delight in degrading and hurting others, love of money, delight in others sins, the temporary euphoria from a deadly drug, etc. A good pleasure, in its proper time, place, and quantity is good. A good pleasure can be abused and lead to sin by improper use—outside its proper time, place, and quantity. St. Francis for example put ashes in his food in order to make his food taste bad, because he understood that the five senses and the search to gratify them made the soul weaker. Now, does that mean that eating is a sin? Of course not, but one should definitely avoid all things that are tasty and addictive such as alcohol, cigarettes, candy, chips, cakes, spices etc. The five senses of man were after the fall corrupted by self-love and that is why countless saints have refused to eat food that is tasty. Not that it's sinful to eat tasty food, but if one always wants to eat these foods, it will become sinful, for gluttony is certainly a sin. We don't know if smoking in very small amounts once in a while is a sin. But we believe that smoking habitually or regularly is a sin, and it definitely cuts out graces from people's lives. We don't see how those who smoke habitually, for example throughout the day, would be any different from people who eat candy all day and thus try to constantly gratify themselves in that way. Hell is too long and life is too short to pander to your five senses, that's for sure! No Excuses for Those Who Use NFP

All those who use Natural Family Planning commit mortal sin. There is a natural law upon all men's hearts and the practice of NFP violates that law. Pope Pius XI teaches there are no exceptions and no excuses. No excuses, even if your priest or bishop said it can be used.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: We admonish, therefore, priests who hear confessions and others who have the care of souls, in virtue of Our Supreme authority and in Our solicitude

for the salvation of souls, not to allow the faithful entrusted to them to err regarding this most grave law of God; much more, that they keep themselves immune from such false opinions, in no way conniving in them. If any confessor or pastor of souls, which may God forbid, lead the faithful entrusted to him into these errors, or should at least confirm them by approval or by guilty silence, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God, the Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of his sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: "They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, **both fall into the pit**".

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BREAST FEEDING

A natural consequence of breast-feeding is that the mother is infertile while breast-feeding. The only just reason for breast-feeding is for the nourishment of the infant. The sin of contraception is committed if at anytime that just reason, breast-feeding to nourish the infant, is perverted by being replaced with the unjust reason of having relations without the possibility of conception. The fact that conception cannot take place is naturally beyond the control of the spouses during this period of time. The very second spouses use breast-feeding to maintain the infertile period so as to prevent conception when they have relations, they commit the mortal sin of contraception. They have replaced the only just and natural reason for breast-feeding, which is nourishment of the infant, with the unjust and unnatural reason of deliberately using it to maintain the infertile period so conception will not take place when they have relations. Breast-feeding, when perverted in this manner, is used as a contraception. It is also best to remain chaste during this period.

UNNATURAL USE OF THE NATURAL CYCLE

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is unnatural. It is the unnatural use of the natural cycles of the wife by effectively eliminating the natural cycle of fertility. It is a plan by man, not God, which makes use of only one cycle, the infertile cycle, while deliberately shunning the other. This is a complete overturning of God's purpose for the natural cycles. In God's perfect plan, spouses are to only have relations when they either know, or suspect the woman is in her fertile cycle. In the case of a barren womb or sterile male seed, spouses can hope for a miracle of conception.

The sin of contraception is not committed in the case of a barren womb or sterile male seed if the spouses always desire to have children if God should grant a miracle of conception. In the above mentioned cases the spouses can commit other sins of lust, if they seek to inflame concupiscence, but they would not commit the sin of contraception.

THE NATURAL CYCLES OF A FRUIT TREE

A fruit tree has its natural cycles for fertility and infertility. There is a proper time to fertilize the tree. If a gardener fertilized the tree when it was not fertile nothing will come of it. If he were a good gardener he would only fertilize it during its known fertile cycle in order for it to conceive and thus produce fruit. Now, what is to be said of a gardener who only fertilizes the

tree during its infertile cycle, while deliberately not fertilizing it during its fertile period? He would have made an unnatural use of the natural cycles of the tree, so unnatural that the people would think him either insane or a hater of fruit. Bad enough, would they say he is, if they see him stupidly wasting time and fertilizing material when nothing can come of it, but worse beyond compare is he when he deliberately stops fertilizing the tree just when it is fertile. Now, if for some reason, not in contempt for the fruit and with the good of the tree in mind, the gardener does not want the tree to bear fruit, then he would not fertilize the tree at all. This is equivalent to honorable continence.

HONORABLE VS. DISHONORABLE CONTINENCE

To deliberately remain chaste during the fertile cycle while having relations only during the infertile cycle is dishonorable continence and is chastity for Satan. It is chastity in the service of lust, and that is not true chastity. Far from honorable is this dark and dastardly deed. The only reason the spouses remain chaste during the fertile period is so they cannot bear children while at the same time having planned to commit the act as soon as the fertile period is over. This is only pretend chastity; pretend continence.

MAN PLAYS STUPID, AND GOD WILL NOT BE MOCKED

Some, evading the issue, say that when NFP is used, conception can still take place if God grants it, thus the spouses are open to conception. Well if it were true that the spouses are open to conception then why all the planning by the spouses to prevent conception by only having relations during the infertile period? The sin resides in the intention of the spouses, not the fact that God may still grant conception in spite of their plan against it. The same can be said of any contraceptive device or technique. None are 100 percent guaranteed to prevent conception. Even those who were sterilized have conceived. Sadly, these are the children that are referred to by these bastard parents as mistakes. The children they bear will be children of fornication whom God will use to torment the parents. Question this not, O blind men, who love evil and love to play stupid. Do you not see the discord in your own families, the rebellion of children against their rebellious parents? Sin begets sin. In that which you sin, you shall be punished. Think not that God is like sinful men in that He lets sin go unpunished. Open your eyes and observe the history of fallen man. Has God ever allowed sin to go unpunished? Look at the lust that infects the fallen-away priests who promote NFP?

Examine your conscience now, all you who use NFP, and confess your mortal sins before it is too late. Examine your conscience real good and ask yourself if you had deliberately planned to prevent conception when you performed the marital act. It does not matter what the lust filled faithless priest tells you. He cannot quell your conscience, because this sin violates the law God has written upon your heart. This priest will not be able to console you when you are both in hell. Take to heart Pope Pius XI warning in *Casti Connubii*. "They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, **both fall into the pit.**" The priests and the people they are leading astray will all go to hell for this sin alone.

A last most important point, there is no remission of sin outside the Catholic Church and that is where most of you readers are. "Outside the Church there is no salvation nor remission of sins." You must learn the Catholic faith and abjure from your heresies or schisms and thus enter the Catholic Church before your sins can be forgiven. The root of the whole problem

that leads to sins of immorality like NFP is the loss of the Catholic faith.

Questions/Statements:

Below are two often used statements from sinful and heretical NFP advocates:

1) Natural Family Planning (NFP) can be both sinful and not sinful. It is sinful if it is used as a method of contraception, which is to stop the chance of conceiving because children are not desired. It is not sinful if it is used because of a medical condition, such as the wife's reproductive system is damaged placing her and her infant in danger of death if she was to conceive and bear children. In this case NFP is not used to prevent conception because children are not desired, but to prevent the possible death of the wife and infant.

2) The sin of contraception is committed when physical devices are used during the marital act so as to prevent conception. NFP does not use a physical device during the marital act to prevent conception, thus the marital act is left open to conception if God so wills it. Therefore, Natural Family Planning is not contraception.

Answers to these heretical and sinful objections:

1) The Medical Condition

Natural Family Planning is contraception. Therefore, it cannot be practiced for any reason. Pope Pius XI condemned contraception for any reason, no matter how grave, specifically mentioning the medical excuse of "difficulties... on the part of the mother" and the economic excuse of "difficulties... on the part of family circumstances."

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children **because of the difficulties**, whether **on the part of the mother** or on the part of family circumstances. But, no reason, however grave, may be put forward by anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

Pope Pius XI says, "no reason, however grave, may be put forward by anything intrinsically against nature."

The thing that he is talking about that is "intrinsically against nature" is contraception and all the various forms and disguises. If the mother and/or infant would be in danger of death due to pregnancy, then either the spouses must refrain from the marital act, not just during the fertile period but also the infertile period, which Pope Pius XI calls "virtuous continence." Or, if they do engage in the marital act, they must not deliberately plan to prevent conception; they must desire to have children; and, they must bear the consequences of the wife and infant's possible death if the wife gets pregnant, while favoring the life of neither if pregnancy occurs. Pope Pius sums this up as follows.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: "As to the 'medical and therapeutic indication' to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity

the mother whose health and even life is imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless, what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: 'Thou shalt not kill'. The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it... Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing."

If the mother or infant's life is threatened by child bearing, then either the marital act is abstained from altogether by virtuous continence, or it is done with the hope of conception, being ready to bear the consequences of the death of the mother or the infant.

VIRTUOUS CONTINENCE VS. CONTRACEPTION

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, IV. Vices Opposed To Christian Marriage: "And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due the offspring, which many have the audacity to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence, but by frustrating the marriage act."

"Virtuous continence" is neither virtuous or continence if spouses have marital relations during the infertile period while having deliberately planned to avoid having relations during the fertile period. The intent is not to abstain from marital relations. Rather, the intent is precisely to have marital relations while having planned to prevent conception.

Natural Family Planning deliberately attempts to frustrate the marital act's primary purpose of child bearing. It frustrates the natural fertile cycle, when conception can take place, by deliberately planning only to have relations during the natural infertile cycle. The natural fertile cycle is deliberately, and thus unnaturally frustrated (avoided).

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: "Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious."

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND ONANISM

NFP is a form of Onanism. Onanism is the contraceptive method in which the male withdraws from the marital act so as to pour his seed upon the ground in an attempt to prevent conception. Onan, "*when he went in to his brother's wife, he spilled his seed upon the ground, lest children should be born...*" (Gen. 38:9) This form of contraception actually takes place outside the marital act, after the male had withdrawn. Natural Family Planning is similar. It is

the performing of the marital act during the infertile period with the hope of pouring the male seed upon infertile ground (an infertile womb), while deliberately withdrawing from the marital act during the fertile period when conception could take place. In the use of Onanism and Natural Family Planning, contraception takes place outside the marital act by withdrawal, the difference being the time period in which the withdrawal takes place. Also, both methods attempt to drop the male seed upon infertile ground, the difference being Onanism drops the male seed upon infertile ground outside the womb, while NFP hopes to drop the male seed upon infertile ground inside an infertile womb. In both cases a deliberate physical withdrawal from the marital act takes place, a deliberate plan is carried out to drop the seed upon infertile ground, and the contraception takes place outside the marital act.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

NFP is also similar to the contraceptive method of birth control pills. Birth control pills are used prior to the marital act in an attempt to frustrate the natural fertile cycle **by unnaturally inhibiting it**. NFP is also used prior to the marital act in an attempt to frustrate the natural fertile cycle by **unnaturally avoiding it**. The only difference is that one inhibits and the other avoids the natural fertile period. Both plan and prepare for conception not to take place when the marital act is performed.

THE TWO CONDITIONS OF CONTRACEPTION

Contraception attempts to frustrate the marital act by a deliberate plan of the spouses to prevent conception when they engage in the marital act. Before the marital act there is a premeditated plan to prevent conception in every case. Either the spouses plan to use physical devices during the act; withdraw during the act by spilling the male seed upon the ground; use birth control pills before the act to frustrate the natural fertile cycle by unnaturally inhibiting it; or, use Natural Family Planning before the act to frustrate the natural fertile cycle by unnaturally avoiding it while only engaging in the marital act during the natural infertile period. The motive and goal is the exact same in every case, the deliberate attempt to prevent conception when the marital act is performed. Therefore, the mortal sin of contraception is committed when two conditions are met, the planning to engage in the marital act while also having planned to prevent conception, it does not matter if the plan fails and conception actually takes place, mortal sin is still committed because the intent of the spouses is that conception does not take place.

2) All methods of contraception are open to conception

Just as the use of Onanism and Birth Control Pills are no guarantee that conception will not occur, because it does, so also, Natural Family Planning is no guarantee that conception will not occur, because it does. They are all open to conception if God so wills it. The sin of contraception has nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that God can make conception happen, in spite of the spouses' deliberate plan not to make it happen. The mortal sin of contraception lies in the intent of the spouses, not whether conception actually happens or not.

All marital acts, no matter what contraception method is used, are open to conception if God so wills it. God opens barren wombs past the childbearing years. If the spouses Natural

Family Planning succeeds according to their desires and careful planning, then, conception will not take place when they engage in the marital act. I say if it succeeds, because no form of contraception is 100 percent guaranteed. Even men who had vasectomies and women who had their tubes tied or hysterectomies still conceived children. The fact that conception can take place, even after spouses had planned to prevent it, does not allow the spouses the excuse that the act is still open to conception. Because, according to their premeditated plan and intent it is their hope that the marital act is not open to conception, and that is where the mortal sin lies.

For example, is a man who plots to murder another man innocent if an accident prevents him from murdering the man? Even though the murder did not occur, he is guilty because he wanted to murder him. Mortal sin is committed in the intent, even if for some reason the crime cannot be carried out. A married man desires to commit adultery with a woman. He attempts to carry out his plan, but God thwarts it, and he does not succeed. Is this man innocent because his plan and attempted act of adultery failed? No! He is guilty of the mortal sin of adultery because adultery was in his heart; he would have committed it if God did not prevent it. Jesus teaches, *“I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* (Mt. 5:28) If after the man failed, he continued to plan and attempt to commit adultery with the woman, he would be guilty of mortal sin every time, whether the plan and attempt succeeds or not.

All one needs to know if the sin of contraception has been committed is to ask oneself, while engaging in the marital act, “Do I desire and hope conception takes place if God should grant it?” If you answer no, you committed the mortal sin of contraception. If you answered yes, while having planned by NFP for conception not to take place, you add a mortal sin of lying to the mortal sin of contraception. For if you really wanted conception to take place, you would not have planned to prevent it.

It is the unwillingness to conceive a child while engaging in the marital act that constitutes the mortal sin of contraception, and if there was a premeditated plan to prevent conception, then the mortal sin is committed before the act as soon as the plan is consented to.

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus* 15:7, A.D. 400: “You [Manicheans] make your Auditors adulterers of their wives when they take care lest the women with whom they copulate conceive. They take wives according to the laws of matrimony by tablets announcing that the marriage is contracted to procreate children; and then, fearing because of your law [against childbearing] . . . they copulate in a shameful union only to satisfy lust for their wives. They are unwilling to have children, on whose account alone marriages are made. How is it, then, that you are not those prohibiting marriage, as the Apostle predicted of you so long ago [1 Tim. 4:1-4], when you try to take from marriage what marriage is? When this is taken away, husbands are shameful lovers, wives are harlots, bridal chambers are brothels, fathers-in-law are pimps.”

NFP’S INCREDIBLE EVIDENCE

No birth control method are 100 percent guaranteed to prevent conception. As a matter of fact, NFP has been proven to be one of the most successful forms of contraception other than birth

control pills. Hence, even according to this heretical theology, NFP must be considered one of the most sinful methods of contraception because it is more successful in preventing conception than Onanism, which is the least effective contraception method. The following are some testimonies to the great effectiveness of NFP in preventing conception:

Birth control with LadyComp is safe, reliable and natural!
Birth control with LadyComp focuses mainly on the long-term health and well-being of the woman.
LadyComp is programmed with all available natural family planning research data and uses biomathematical forecasting calculations as well as the very latest computer techniques.
LadyComp contains the first medical expertise to help provide safe, reliable and natural birth control.
The fertile and infertile days can be determined without any bothersome or harmful interventions in the body's natural functions. Many women suffer from side-effects of the birth control pill. LadyComp offers Contraception without drugs or side-effects...
Safe and reliable:
99.3 percent reliable (Based on independent clinical studies documented by the manufacturer)...

Natural Family Planning
What is natural family planning?
Natural family planning is a way to help a couple determine when sexual intercourse can and cannot result in pregnancy...
How effective are these methods in helping a couple avoid pregnancy?
These methods can help a couple avoid pregnancy if the couple receives training from a specialized instructor and if they carefully follow all of the instructions provided. (Ask your doctor how to find an instructor who is specially trained in teaching natural family planning.)
Both methods can be 90% to 98% effective (2 to 10 pregnancies per 100 couples) when they are practiced correctly...

PAPAL APPROVAL OF ALL ROMAN CONGREGATIONS' DECREES IS ILLOGICAL

Some people who try to defend the sinful practice of NFP argue that there are many Catholic books with Church approval that teach and approve of these practices. In reality, there are a lot of heretical imprimatured books. It is illogical to presume that a pope reads and thus personally approves all official decrees and responses from the Roman Congregations, along with all unofficial ones attributed to the Roman Congregations found in the many books that publish them, along with reading all books in the world with imprimaturs, along with ruling the Church spiritually and temporally, along with sanctifying his own soul by prayer and meditation, along with sanctifying Catholics as the chief shepherd, and along with calling non-Catholics to conversion.

St. Pope Pius X testifies to the impossibility of a pope's inspecting every imprimatured book,

even with the help of the Holy Office, and also testifies that there were many bad books that were given imprimaturs by either heretical or unvigilant bishops:

St. Pope Pius X, *Pacendi Dominici Gregis*, 1907: “51. We bid you do everything in your power to drive out of your dioceses, even by solemn interdict, any pernicious books that may be in circulation there. The Holy See neglects no means to put down writings of this kind, but **the number of them has now grown to such an extent that it is impossible to censure them all...**”

The same logically applies to the official Roman Congregations’ decrees and responses, and more so to the unofficial decrees and responses found in the many books that list them.

THE ORDINARY MAGISTERIUM CONDEMNS THE CONTRACEPTIVE INTENT

A doctrine of faith or morals that is taught by the unanimous consent of the fathers and saints is part of the ordinary magisterium. The unanimous consent of the fathers and saints, and therefore the ordinary magisterium, condemns the contraceptive intent and hence any method used to carry out that intent (which includes the new methods that modern science has invented, such as NFP, foams, and birth control pills).

All the fathers and saints teach that the sin of contraception is committed in thought (intent) as well as in deed. St. Augustine sums it up well:

St. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:15:17, A.D. 419: “I am supposing, then, although you are not lying [with your wife] for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation **by an evil prayer or an evil deed...**”

The intent, the desire, or the prayer that conception does not occur during conjugal relations is when and where the mortal sin of contraception is first committed, even if no contraceptive method is used, because “*evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord.*” (Prv. 15:26) During conjugal relations spouses must always desire conception, even if for some reason it is humanly impossible. This is the unanimous teaching of the fathers and saints:

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children*, 2:10:95:3: “To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature.”

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 1:19, A.D. 393: “But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother seed. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children?”

All other quotes on this subject from fathers and saints unanimously teach the same. Not one of them teaches that God allows spouses to have conjugal relations without also desiring conception. The intention of the spouses that conception does not occur during conjugal relations is the crux of the matter, the root of the mortal sin of contraception. Even before conjugal relations, spouses have committed the mortal sin of contraception if they had planned or only desired that conception should not take place during conjugal relations. Jesus

teaches that sin is first committed in the heart even before a man carries out his sinful deed. He says, “*You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” (Mt. 5:27-28)

THE SOLEMN MAGISTERIUM INFALLIBLY CONDEMNS THE CONTRACEPTIVE INTENT

A doctrine of faith or morals becomes part of the solemn (extraordinary) magisterium when a pope infallibly defines it and hence makes it a dogma of faith or morals. Not only the ordinary magisterium but also the solemn magisterium, by an infallible definition from Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* in 1930, condemn the contraceptive intent and hence any method used to carry out that intent (which includes any new methods that science and medicine had not yet invented, such as birth control pills that were introduced to the public in the early 1960's

The infallible part of the encyclical that condemns the contraceptive intent, and hence any method used to carry out that intent, is merely confirming a moral decree that is written upon all men's hearts: that the primary purpose of marriage and thus conjugal relations is procreation, to be fruitful and multiply. This condemns the opposite belief as heretical: that spouses can have conjugal relations without desiring to procreate. Even if for some reason procreation is impossible, spouses must still desire to procreate during conjugal relations, hoping that God may grant a miracle of conception.

Pius XI again teaches below that no reason, not even extreme poverty, can justify a spouse's desire that conception does not take place during conjugal relations:

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: “We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children. However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: ‘Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe. God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.’”

This condemns the extreme poverty excuse as well as all excuses. Pope Pius XI teaches that spouses who do not desire conception during conjugal relations because of poverty, even if it is extreme, have no faith in God that He can provide for them and regulate the size of their family; and they have also committed a mortal sin, an intrinsically evil act.

He also warns that God will curse spouses for committing this mortal sin, and thus their problems will only get worse without God to help them. To their calamitous state (for example, extreme poverty), they would have added a calamitous error, mortal sin, and thus

bring down God's wrath upon themselves. For Pope Pius XI warns: "However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error."

Hell will be long for those who practice NFP against the natural law. We implore all priests and laymen to accept the Church's teaching on this topic, and regain faith in God's providence. If you have been convinced to believe in this abominable heresy that contradicts the natural law, repent and confess your sin immediately. For death may strike you unexpectedly, and it is impossible to escape the eternal fire and torment of Hell as long as you practice NFP! It's quite clear that the new teaching of NFP is a modernistic heresy condemned by the Church, Popes, Saints and the infallible word of God! Will you be a modernist and follow the herd of goats in fleshly lust instead of following the purity and holiness of God and his Church? If yes, then the eternal hellfire will be your home forevermore!

SEXUAL PLEASURE IS LUST

"Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power. ...And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever." (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: That you should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God."
(1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

CHURCH FATHERS UNANIMOUS ON FIGHTING AGAINST SEXUAL PLEASURE

What follows are some quotes from the Church Fathers who teach that spouses sin when they have relations for sexual pleasure. And some compare it to using one another as whores and prostitutes:

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 6:23:18: "The genital ['generating'] part of the body, as the name itself teaches, has been received by us for no other purpose than the generation of offspring."

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian*, 1:19, A.D. 393: "But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother's seed. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children?"

St. Augustine, *The Morals of the Manichees*, 18:65, A.D. 388: “This proves that you [Manicheans] approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore, whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage and makes the woman not a wife but a prostitute, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion.”

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, 22:30: “For thus the eternal law, that is, the will of God creator of all creatures, taking counsel for the conservation of natural order, not to serve lust, but to see to the preservation of the race, permits the delight of mortal flesh to be released from the control of reason in copulation only to propagate progeny.”

ASK GOD TO ELIMINATE OR NEUTRALIZE SEXUAL PLEASURE

Firstly, even though a husband must consummate the marital act for conception to occur, this does not mean he must have any pleasure to his flesh when doing so. He can pray to God to remove the pleasure and turn it to a strange, despised, and hated sensation or at least to a neutral sensation. Surely this is an immanently good thing to ask God for. And God will grant it if the person is sincere and not worthy of being abandoned to the demon of lust for other reasons that he must first overcome. If this goal were achieved, then concupiscence would be conquered and the marital act would only occur with the intention of procreation and with no other motive; and the act itself would produce no pleasure to the flesh but only a strange and unwanted sensation caused by the venom of original sin in the flesh.

This can be proved further by the Revelations of St. Bridget Book 1, chapter 9

The Virgin Mary reveals the Life of Her parents to St. Bridget: “He united my father and mother in a marriage so chaste that there could not be found a more chaste marriage at that time. They never wanted to come together except in accordance with the Law, and only then with the intention to bring forth offspring. When an angel revealed to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, they would rather have died than to come together in carnal love; lust was dead in them. I assure you that when they did come together, it was because of divine love and because of the angel’s message, not out of carnal desire, but against their will and out of a holy love for God. In this way, my flesh was put together by their seed and through divine love.”

At one time in the history of the Catholic Church, some Catholic spouses had achieved this goal or at least tried to. Empirical evidence proves this fact. When I was young and into my teenage years, it was a joke among non-Catholics, such as Protestants, that Catholics are prudes because Catholic spouses do not enjoy sex, that they only had relations with the lights out and with only as much flesh exposed to consummate the marital act, which took place as quickly as possible in order to consummate the act. Catholic women were ridiculed the most because they never had any pleasure during the marital act. The lust-filled non-Catholics did their best to tell Catholic women to enjoy sex— and then to its fullest. This started to happen in my lifetime. And now almost all men, as well as women, are lust-filled whores. Almost if not every so-called Catholic now looks upon pleasure during sex as normal and something good instead of something strange and abnormal caused by original sin.

Many deluded and lust filled souls that live today have fooled themselves and others that sexual lust and pleasure inside a marriage is something good and praiseworthy. They say that one of the purposes of marriage is so that they can have relations and that marital relations is a sign of love between the man and the wife and that spouses are allowed to have as much sexual pleasure as they can when they have marital relations as long as they do not prevent conception. They even go so far as to say that provoking the flesh by foreplay or by fondling with the hands in improper bodily places is according to God's will. They think that sex is a gift from God intended to satisfy them, when it in fact is an evil product of the fall. In truth, such spouses are like drug addicts who regard the marital relations as a fix. Their intention is exactly the same as a drug addict, although their drug of choice is sex rather than drugs. Here is divine condemnation of their abominable opinions from the Revelations of St. Bridget:

The Son of God speaks: "But people in this age are joined in marriage for seven reasons: First, because of facial beauty. Second, because of wealth. Third, because of the despicable pleasure and indecent joy they get out of their impure intercourse. Fourth, because of feasts with friends and uncontrolled gluttony. Fifth, because of vanity in clothing and eating, in joking and entertainment and games and other vanities. Sixth, for the sake of procreating children but not to raise them for the honor of God or good works but for worldly riches and honor. Seventh, they come together for the sake of lust and they are like brute beasts in their lustful desires.

They come to the doors of my church with one mind and consent, but all their desires and inner thoughts are completely against me. They prefer their own will, which aims at pleasing the world, instead of my will. If all their thoughts and wishes were directed toward me, and if they entrusted their will into my hands and entered into wedlock in fear of me, then I would give them my consent and be as the third with them. But now is my consent, which should be their most precious thing, gone from them, because they have lust in their heart and not my love. Thereafter, they go up to my altar where they hear that they should be one heart and one soul, but then my heart flees from them because they have not the warmth of my heart and know not the taste of my body.

They seek the warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love the flesh that will be eaten by worms. Therefore do such people join in marriage without the bond and union of God the Father and without the Son's love and without the Holy Spirit's consolation. When the couple comes to the bed, my Spirit leaves them immediately and the spirit of impurity approaches instead because they only come together for the sake of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else with each other." – (The Revelations of St. Bridget Book 1, Chapter 26)

As everyone can see, and as also everyone knows by their conscience, those who marry for physical appearance or for to satisfy their sexual lust are abominable and sick in their minds. To love something that will be eaten by worms must surely look sickening to God when he views spouses who marry for the above reasons that are mentioned and condemned by Christ! This physical love is nothing compared to the pure love of God that godly spouses have who love each other in the same way as brothers and sisters loves each other.

"And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever." (Tobias 6:16-

17, 22; 8:9)

As you can read, true spouses regard each other as brothers and sisters, instead of pieces of human meat that they wish to acquire in order to satisfy their sexual temptations and perversions. It is also made clear by Christ in these sentences that spouses must have a dialogue between each other before they have marital relations. This would include prayers and petitions to God that He may grant them offspring that will glorify His Holy Name for all eternity and also the Rosary prayer as mentioned before in this article.

St. Paul warns those who would marry as opposed to those who would remain virgins that spouses “shall have tribulation of the flesh”: “*But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you.*” (1 Cor. 7:28) Certainly St. Paul does not refer to the desire to procreate as a tribulation of the flesh. Consequently, he can be referring only to one thing—sexual pleasure. Indeed, sexual pleasure is a tribulation of the flesh that must hence be fought against or the Devil will succeed in tempting a spouse to fall into mortal sins of impurity either with the other spouse or with himself or with someone other than his spouse. There is no neutral ground with sexual pleasure—you either seek to enjoy it and hence enflame it by foreplay or other vile practices or seek to quell it and hence douse the fire of lust. It is also important for spouses to realize that when there is no chance to have marital relations, no kind of fondling or sexual foreplay may ever be done, and no sexual thoughts of any kind may ever be entertained. You must fight against the attacks of lust from the devil, or you will soon join him in Hell in a while.

MARITAL RELATIONS DURING PREGNANCY IS SINFUL

It was forbidden and a capital offence for spouses to have marital relations when the wife was pregnant or during her monthly cycle during the Old Covenant era.

Leviticus 20:18 “If any man lie with a woman in her flowers, and uncover her nakedness, and she open the fountain of her blood, both shall be destroyed out of the midst of their people.”

We read in the Old Testament that God had forbid the marital act during the infertile monthly cycle of the woman and when she is pregnant. “*The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.*” (Lev. 15:19) Haydock Commentary: “Days, not only out of the camp, but from the company of men. As soon as a woman shows signs of pregnancy, intercourse would cease until the birth of the child. “*Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers [ed. pregnancy]: neither shalt thou uncover her nakedness.*” (Lev. 18:19) Haydock Commentary: “Saint Augustine believes that this law is still in force. [On Lev. 20:18] This intemperance was by a positive law declared a mortal offence of the Jews.”

This wondrous law from God not only diminished the time a couple could have marital relations, but it also prohibited the woman from the company of men, and this certainly includes her husband. What was God’s reason for separating the woman from her man you might ask? In truth, God who knows more about human weaknesses and sins than all of humanity combined, ordained this so that the temptation to violate his laws and have marital

relations during this period would not happen. For most temptations work like this: as long as you take away the source of the temptation, it will be easier to control.

Another instance of divine condemnation of marital relations during pregnancy is found in The Revelations of St. Bridget Book 10 or additional revelations. St. Bridget asks a man that is now in purgatory about the specific reasons why he escaped eternal hell. This is the third reason why he escaped hell: "The third [reason] is that I obeyed my teacher who advised me to abstain from my wife's bed when I understood that she was pregnant."

Thus, it is perfectly clear that those who have marital relations when they know about the pregnancy is sinning against God and the natural law, for the woman cannot become pregnant again, and their sole motive is then to satisfy their unbridled lusts. Here is some further evidence that even legal marital relations is considered impure according to God, and not holy or good as many heretics now seem to think.

Leviticus 15:16 "The man from whom the seed of copulation goeth out, shall wash all his body with water: and he shall be unclean until the evening. *17* The garment or skin that he weareth, he shall wash with water, and it shall be unclean until the evening. *18* The woman, with whom he copulateth, shall be washed with water, and shall be unclean until the evening. *19* The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days. *20* Every one that toucheth her, shall be unclean until the evening. *21* And every thing that she sleepeth on, or that she sitteth on in the days of her separation, shall be defiled. *22* He that toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes: and being himself washed with water, shall be unclean until the evening. *23* Whosoever shall touch any vessel on which she sitteth, shall wash his clothes: and himself being washed with water, shall be defiled until the evening. *24* If a man copulateth with her in the time of her flowers, he shall be unclean seven days: and every bed on which he shall sleep shall be defiled. *25* The woman that hath an issue of blood many days out of her ordinary time, or that ceaseth not to flow after the monthly courses, as long as she is subject to this disease, shall be unclean, in the same manner as if she were in her flowers. *26* Every bed on which she sleepeth, and every vessel on which she sitteth, shall be defiled. *27* Whosoever toucheth them shall wash his clothes: and himself being washed with water, shall be unclean until the evening. *28* If the blood stop and cease to run, she shall count seven days of her purification."

As can be read from these verses from the Holy Bible, God defines even legal marital relations as defilement and ordains that both husband and wife shall be considered unclean the day they have had marital relations. These wondrous laws also prohibit the man from seeing his wife during her infertile monthly cycle, thus diminishing the temptations of both parties.

Douay-Rheims Bible Commentary of Leviticus 15 "Issue of seed shall be unclean"... These legal uncleannesses were instituted in order to give the people a horror of carnal impurities.

God further defines most exquisite laws about when marital relations must be done, when he commands that the woman shall be considered unclean the time she has her infertile monthly cycle and also seven days after it, thus prohibiting marital relations during the infertile period. This means that God commanded man and wife to only have marital relations on the days that are most favorable for begetting children. And this was before this scientific and medical knowledge was many thousand years from being invented. May the Holy Trinity be blessed

for all eternity! By commanding such wondrous laws, God limited the time a couple can have marital relations, thus decreasing their carnal temptations. For it is very obvious that a man or a woman who have marital relations often, will be tempted to have relations with other people who they are not married to, while people who are completely chaste or who have marital relations very seldom, will be more stronger to resist temptations. Sexual pleasure is more contagious than most drugs of this world, and so, it is very important to guard oneself from being taken over by it.

“Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God or given thanks: but became vain in their thoughts. And their foolish heart was darkened. For, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... Wherefore, God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness: to dishonor their own bodies among themselves. Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. ...And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense to do those things which are not convenient. Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness ...inventors of evil things... Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand that they who do such things, are worthy of death: and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them.” (Rom. 1:21-32)

Because of many false and heretical teachings, almost every spouse now equates love with lust. How to enjoy sex more with your husband or wife is all over the TV, radio, music, newspapers, and magazines. If one spouse does not sexually gratify the other, then the unsatisfied spouse cries out that the other spouse does not love him or her. How perverse this is and totally destructive to true love! How in the world can a shameful momentary sexual pleasure to the flesh be compared to true love—the love that spouses are supposed to have for one another, 24 hours a day and in every thought and deed of the day, even during hard times when they must suffer. How does that compare to a few seconds or minutes of shameful sexual pleasure to the flesh! And if one spouse cannot give sexual pleasure to the other for whatever reason, the non-satisfied spouse looks elsewhere to another man or woman or to an animal or inanimate object to get that sexual pleasure and so-called love that the inadequate spouse cannot give. Ah, how great indeed are the evils caused by spouses who indulge in sexual pleasure instead of fighting against it, instead of quieting it! Indeed, over them Satan has power to cause all kinds of trouble and sins in their life. (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9) In truth, such spouses are like drug addicts that use each other to get their sexual “fix”. What a sick love they have: to equate sex with love!

For instance, Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary never needed to perform this act in order to foster their love for one another. And no married couple could ever have a greater love for one another than these two holiest saints in heaven! One must realize that the Holy Family was chaste for a purpose, to designate God’s goal for families—that is, to remain chaste as much as possible and to only have relations with the intention of bearing children. To say that this sexual act is a sign of love between married couples is to say that those who remain chaste for the glory of God are not truly in love with their spouses for depriving them of this act of love. Spouses must live together 24 hours a day. If they need this marital act to express their love for one another, then the true love they must have for one another when they go about their daily duties would be undermined. How can love be fostered for one another when the act has become bestial? What love can come from an act that is bestial in

nature due to the lustful aspects of it that must be fought against?

It is the unanimous opinion of all the Holy Fathers and Saints that no one can reach the highest understanding and knowledge of God without the wonderful virtue of chastity. This, of course, means both inner and outer chastity. For there is no point in being chaste outwardly if the will or thought of a person consents to impure thoughts.

Our Lady of Fatima: "The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God. . . . Oh! Men must do penance! If they amend their lives Our Lord will still pardon the world; but if they do not, the chastisement will come! Priests should occupy themselves only with the affairs of the Church! They must be pure, very pure."

Mother Godinho asked her: "Do you know what it means to be pure?" "Yes, Yes. I know to be pure in body means to be chaste, to be pure in mind means not to commit sins; not to look at what one should not see, not to steal or lie, and always to speak the truth, even if it is hard."

The impurities and carnal lusts of a person is in fact the highest form of idolatry since the person, in the truest sense of the word is worshiping the fleshly object. He knows that this fleshly object will be eaten by worms and that it has already ceased to exist before God (since God stands above all time) and yet he turns a blind eye to it all. What would not the billions of suffering souls in Hell do, who fell into the most horrifying torments for the sake of carnal impurities and temptations, if they had a second chance? They would in truth gladly walk on the surface of the sun, which is millions of degrees hot for a billions times billions years, if God enabled them to do so. To chose a single second of pleasure for an eternity of excruciating torment and torture is in truth sad beyond words, and yet the whole world consents to this devilish trap. Take heed that you, the reader, do not reject this admonishment, for it might be the last time you will hear such words before the devil devours you for all eternity!

SOME PLEASURES ARE INTRINSICALLY EVIL AND HENCE ALWAYS FORBIDDEN

That some pleasures are intrinsically evil is taught by the natural law and by the positive laws of God's Church. Certain sins give a pleasure unique to themselves and hence are intrinsically evil pleasures. This is attested to in the following verse: "*The discourse of sinners is hateful, and their laughter is at the pleasures of sin.*" (Eccus. 27:14) For instance, the pleasure one gets from murdering a man is an intrinsically evil pleasure. The pleasure one gets from demeaning and degrading someone who is not as smart or rich or physically attractive as himself is an intrinsically evil pleasure. The pleasure one gets from enjoying riotous assemblies is an intrinsically evil pleasure: "*Take no pleasure in riotous assemblies, be they ever so small: for their consternation is continual.*" (Eccus. 18:32) The love of money is an intrinsically evil pleasure: "*There is not a more wicked thing than to love money.*" (Eccus. 10:10) The pleasure one gets from mind-altering drugs, such as LSD and marijuana, is an intrinsically evil pleasure. When I was trying to convert a young boy, he told me that marijuana is good because God created it and it makes him feel good. I told him that God also created poison and some poisons taste good and may make you feel good for a while but will

nevertheless kill you. This example applies perfectly to sexual pleasure because to some it tastes and feels good for a while but it surely kills the soul if not fought against.

King Solomon did not believe that some pleasures, such as sexual pleasure, are intrinsically evil. Hence instead of fighting against sexual pleasure, he indulged in it and fell into mortal sins of immorality which led him into mortal sins of idolatry and apostasy:

“And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying **every** pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared: and esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour.” (Ectes. 2:10)

FOREPLAY IS INTRINSICALLY EVIL

The Catholic Church teaches that foreplay between spouses is intrinsically evil. And hence any sexual activity that cannot procreate if procreation were possible is intrinsically evil and thus a mortal sin.

“And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9)

“They seek the warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love the flesh that will be eaten by worms.” (The Revelations of St. Bridget Book 1, Chapter 26)

Therefore, any sexual activity between spouses for any purpose outside of sexual intercourse is intrinsically evil because any such sexual activity cannot procreate even if the wife was fertile and hence the primary motive of procreation cannot be present. Therefore the excuse that some spouses must perform sexual activities outside of sexual intercourse as a preparation for sexual intercourse is condemned by the Church. It is a sinful excuse that allows spouses to perpetuate their sexual perversions by sexually abusing their body parts that have nothing whatsoever to do with procreation. If you practice any variation of foreplay, you will without doubt be cast to Hell to suffer and burn for all eternity.

Evil theologians say sodomy between spouses is not mortally sinful

The worst mortal sin in regard to forbidden sexual activity between spouses is sodomy (also known as the sin of Sodom), which is one of the four sins that cry out to God for vengeance:

Penny Catechism (A Catechism of Christian Doctrine), 16th century: “**Q. 327. Which are the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance?** A. The four sins crying to heaven for vengeance are: 1. Wilful murder (*Gen. iv*); 2. The sin of Sodom (*Gen. xviii*); 3. Oppression of the poor (*Exod. ii*); 4. Defrauding laborers of their wages (*James v*).”

Yet in spite of this dogmatic teaching on morals, Fr. Heribert Jone, in every edition of his book *Moral Theology* from 1929 onwards, teaches that a husband can sodomize his wife and his wife can allow it and neither commit mortal sin as long as he consummates his act naturally with the intention to procreate. And the pervert Jone teaches that this act is not

sodomy at all because the husband does not spill his seed when sodomizing his wife. Note that the term “imperfect sodomy” used by Fr. Jone means the mortal sin of sodomy between persons of the opposite sex, and “perfect sodomy” is the mortal sin of sodomy between those of the same sex:

Moral Theology, Fr. Heribert Jone, 1951: “**I. Imperfect Sodomy**, i.e., rectal intercourse, is a grave sin when the seminal fluid is wasted: Excluding the sodomitical intention it is neither sodomy nor a grave sin if intercourse is begun in a rectal manner with the intention of consummating it naturally or if some sodomitical action is posited without danger of pollution...” (“3. The Sins of Married People,” Section 757.)

Hence the pervert Fr. Jone says that rectal intercourse between a husband and wife is not a grave sin as long as the husband does not spill his seed when sodomizing his wife. And according to the pervert Fr. Jone, this is not even sodomy! One must ask, then, “What is it?” and “What is the purpose of this filthy perverted act?” It is sodomy, plain and simple! And the purpose is to mock God and to degrade and disgrace the wife. Not only is this sodomitical act by the spouses contrary to nature and the natural law and cries out to God for vengeance, but it is also physically destructive to the health of both spouses.

However, Fr. Jone contradicts his above teaching within his same book. In Section 230 he gives the correct definition of sodomy as follows:

Moral Theology, Fr. Heribert Jone: “230. – II. Sodomy. 1. Definition. Sodomy is unnatural carnal copulation either with a person of the same sex (perfect sodomy) or of the opposite sex; the latter of heterosexual sodomy consists in rectal intercourse (imperfect sodomy). Either kind of sodomy will be consummated or non-consummated according as semination takes place or not.”

Therefore whether the seed is spilled during sodomy or not, it is still sodomy but one is called consummated sodomy and the other is non-consummated sodomy. Hence in Section 230 he correctly teaches that a husband who sodomizes his wife but does not consummate the sodomy is still guilty of sodomy, which he correctly classifies as non-consummated sodomy. His teaching in this section contradicts what he teaches in Section 757 when he says that the husband’s non-consummated sodomy is not sodomy at all. The natural law alone tells even a pagan who never heard of the word of God that any form of rectal intercourse for any reason is intrinsically evil, as well as any kind of sexual activity outside what is necessary for procreation.

And it should come as no surprise to those who heed the words of the Blessed and Ever Virgin Mary who said that massive immorality prevailed among most priests in 1846 as a result of the great loss of faith by those who were Catholic in name only:

Church approved Revelation of Our Lady of La Salette, 1846: “The priests, ministers of my Son, the priests, by their wicked lives, by irreverence and their impiety in the celebration of the holy mysteries, by their love of money, their love of honors and pleasures, **the priests have become cesspools of impurity**... The chiefs, the leaders of the people of God have neglected prayer and penance, and the devil has bedimmed their intelligence. They have become wandering stars which the old devil will drag along with his tail to make them

perish... In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in those dedicated to God. They will blind them in such a way, that, unless they are blessed with a special grace, these people will take on the spirit of these angels of hell; several religious institutions will lose all faith and will lose many souls... Evil books will be abundant on earth and the spirits of darkness will spread everywhere a universal slackening in all that concerns the service of God... Rome will lose the faith and become the see of Antichrist... The Church will be in eclipse, the world will be in dismay... only faith will survive.”

To those who have attentively read the Book of Lamentations, it should come as no surprise that God’s chosen people have yet again returned to their own vomit of paganism and the sins of Sodom:

“And the iniquity of the daughter of my people is made greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment.”
(Lamentations 4:6)

INFALLIBLE CATHOLIC DOGMA AND DOCTRINE YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT

The unchanging dogma Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation and the necessity of the Sacrament of Baptism for Salvation, was defined as a truth by our first pope St. Peter himself:

“... *the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ*... ***Nor is there salvation in any other.*** For there is no other name, under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12).

There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ, and the Catholic Church is His Mystical Body. Since there is no entering into the Catholic Church of Christ without the Sacrament of Baptism, this means that only baptized Catholics who die in the state of grace (and those who become baptized Catholics and die in the state of grace) can hope to be saved.

“*If anyone abideth not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth.*” (John 15:6)

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (# 22), June 29, 1943: “***Actually only those are to be numbered among the members of the Church who have received the laver of regeneration [water baptism] and profess the true faith.***”

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (# 27), June 29, 1943: “He (Christ) also determined that **through Baptism (cf. Jn. 3:5) those who should believe would be incorporated in the Body of the Church.**”

NO SALVATION OUTSIDE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The following statements on Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation are from the highest teaching authority of the Catholic Church. They are *ex cathedra* Papal decrees

(decrees from the Chair of St. Peter). Therefore, they constitute the teaching given to the Catholic Church by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Such teachings are unchangeable and are classified as part of the solemn magisterium (the extraordinary teaching authority of the Catholic Church).

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, “Cantate Domino,” 1441, *ex cathedra* (*infallible statement from the chair of Peter*): **“The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that all those who are outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews or heretics and schismatics, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives; that the unity of this ecclesiastical body is of such importance that only for those who abide in it do the Church’s sacraments contribute to salvation and do fasts, almsgiving and other works of piety and practices of the Christian militia produce eternal rewards; and that nobody can be saved, no matter how much he has given away in alms and even if he has shed blood in the name of Christ, unless he has persevered in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.”**

As we can see from this infallible statement from the chair of Peter, no one at all can be saved **unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives..** Yet, many people today who call themselves Catholic or Christian, boldly and obstinately assert the direct opposite of this statement and claim that protestants, heretics, Jews, schismatics and even Pagans can attain eternal life.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio* (# 2), May 27, 1832: **“Finally some of these misguided people attempt to persuade themselves and others that men are not saved only in the Catholic religion,** but that even heretics may attain eternal life.”

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, The Athanasian Creed, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: **“Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.”** (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1, pp. 550-553; Denzinger 39-40.)

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: **“There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice.”**

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, Nov. 18, 1302, *ex cathedra*:

“With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess **this Church outside of which there is no salvation nor remission of sin... Furthermore, we declare, say, define, and proclaim to every human creature that they by absolute necessity for salvation are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff.**”

Those who refuse to believe in the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation until *they* understand how there is justice in it are simply withholding their Faith in Christ’s revelation. Those with the true Faith in Christ (and His Church) accept His teaching first and understand the truth in it (i.e., *why* it is true) second. A Catholic does not withhold his belief in Christ’s revelation until he can understand it. That is the mentality of a faithless heretic who possesses

insufferable pride. St. Anselm sums up the true Catholic outlook on this point.

St. Anselm, Doctor of the Church, *Prosologion*, Chap. 1: “**For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand**. For this also I believe, that **unless I believed, I should not understand**.”

CONCERNING THOSE BAPTIZED VALIDLY AS INFANTS BY MEMBERS OF NON-CATHOLIC SECTS

The Catholic Church has always taught that anyone (including a layman or a non-Catholic) can validly baptize if he adheres to proper matter and form and if he has the intention of doing what the Church does.

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, “Exultate Deo,” 1439: “In case of necessity, however, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, yes even a pagan and a heretic can baptize, so long as he preserves the form of the Church and has the intention of doing what the Church does.” (Denzinger 696)

The Church has always taught that infants baptized in heretical and schismatic churches are made Catholics, members of the Church and subjects of the Roman Pontiff, even if the people who baptized them are heretics who are outside the Catholic Church. This is because the infant, being below the age of reason, cannot be a heretic or schismatic. He cannot have an impediment which would prevent Baptism from making him a member of the Church.

Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Sess. 7, Can. 13 on the Sacrament of Baptism: “**If anyone shall say that infants, because they have not actual faith, after having received baptism are not to be numbered among the faithful... let him be anathema.**”

This means that all baptized infants wherever they are, even those baptized in heretical non-Catholic churches by heretical ministers, are made members of the Catholic Church. They are also made subject to the Roman Pontiff (if there is one). So, at what one point does this baptized Catholic infant become a non-Catholic – severing his membership in the Church and subjection to the Roman Pontiff? After the baptized infant reaches the age of reason, he or she becomes a heretic or a schismatic and severs his membership in the Church and severs subjection to the Roman Pontiff *when he or she obstinately rejects any teaching of the Catholic Church or loses Faith in the essential mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation*.

Pope Clement VI, *Super quibusdam*, Sept. 20, 1351: “...We ask: **In the first place whether you and the Church of the Armenians which is obedient to you, believe that all those who in baptism have received the same Catholic faith, and afterwards have withdrawn and will withdraw in the future from the communion of this same Roman Church, which one alone is Catholic, are schismatic and heretical, if they remain obstinately separated from the faith of this Roman Church**. In the second place, we ask whether you and the Armenians obedient to you believe that no man of the wayfarers outside the faith of this Church, and outside the obedience of the Pope of Rome, can finally be saved.”

So, one must be clear on these points: 1) The unbaptized (Jews, Muslims, pagans, etc.) must

all join the Catholic Church by receiving Baptism and the Catholic Faith or they will *all* be lost. 2) Among those who are baptized as infants, they are made Catholics, members of the Church and subjects of the Roman Pontiff by Baptism. They only sever that membership (*which they already possess*) when they obstinately reject any Catholic dogma or believe something contrary to the essential mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation. In the teaching of Pope Clement VI above, we see this second point clearly taught: all who receive the Catholic Faith in Baptism lose that Faith and become schismatic and heretical if they become “obstinately separated from the faith of this Roman Church.”

The fact is that all Protestants who reject the Catholic Church or its dogmas on the sacraments, the Papacy, etc. have obstinately separated from the Faith of the Roman Church and have therefore severed their membership in the Church of Christ. The same is true with the “Eastern Orthodox” who obstinately reject dogmas on the Papacy and Papal Infallibility. They need to be converted to the Catholic Faith for salvation.

MATERIAL HERESY

The children or people that are baptized in heretical communities cannot become heretics until they reach the age of reason or until they adopt any heretical views that are opposed to the Catholic Church. This means that some of those baptized persons who are now going to a heretical or schismatic “Church” might not yet be heretics even if everyone else in the same Church are heretics. However, when these children reach the age of reason, many of them might fall into an error called “material heresy.”

The term “material heresy” is used to describe persons who believe in a heresy without knowing that they are contradicting the Catholic Church’s official and infallible teaching. There’s no such thing as a material heretic in the dogmatic teaching of the Church. There are heretics; there are schismatics; and there are Catholics. *Material heretic* is simply a name for a Catholic who is erring in good faith about a dogma. In other words, it’s another name for a mistaken Catholic. It’s a person who is holding a false position – one that is strictly incompatible with Catholic dogma. However, that person is not obstinate against that dogma. He would change his position immediately upon being informed of the true position. The “material heretic” is a Catholic. This is very important to understand. Many Catholic saints have been material heretics. **St. Thomas, for example, did not believe that Mary was conceived immaculately** (*Summa Theologica*, Part. III, Q. 14, Art. 3, Reply to Obj. 1) even though it is now a defined dogma that Mary was conceived immaculately, and no wonder that even Saints have erred in their teaching, for it is very hard to imagine that a human can know every Church teaching that exists.

THE NATURAL LAW

The natural law is written on the heart of all men, so that all men know that certain things are against God’s law and that certain things are in accordance with the natural law of charity, etc.

As the *Haydock Bible and Commentary* correctly explains about Romans 2:14-16,

*“these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful: they may also do some actions that are morally good, as by giving alms to relieve the poor; honoring their parents, etc. **not that these actions, morally good, will suffice for their justification of themselves, or make them deserve a supernatural reward in the kingdom of heaven; but God, out of His infinite mercy, will give them some supernatural graces**”* which if they continue to cooperate with they will get more graces and eventually be exposed to the Catholic Faith, which they must have to be saved.”

All baptized *infants* are Catholics, **even if they are baptized in a Methodist church-building**, etc. This is *de fide*. These baptized Catholics, when they reach the age of reason in a Protestant building, if they hold the Trinity and the Incarnation (which are the two essential mysteries of the Catholic Faith) hold the absolutely essential mysteries of the Catholic Faith.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Athanasian Creed, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: “Whoever *wishes* to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.– But **the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity.**..

“But it is necessary for eternal salvation that he faithfully believe also in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Son of God is God and man... This is the Catholic faith; unless each one believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.”

If they don’t know about any *other* Catholic dogmas (other than the Trinity and Incarnation) then they are not heretics but Catholics [Christians], **unless** they hold a position that is incompatible with Faith in the Trinity and Incarnation or deny a truth that all know about God and the natural law or deny something that they know to be clearly taught in Scripture. For instance, if the baptized person described above claims to believe in the Trinity and Incarnation but holds that all religions are more or less good, then he is a heretic and does not have the Catholic Faith (*even before he knows that such a position is condemned by the Church*) **because his belief is incompatible with true Faith in the Trinity as the one true God**, which belief he must have to be said to have the Catholic Faith in its simplest components.

Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos* (# 2), Jan. 6, 1928:

“...that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy... **Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it...**”

Another example would be if the baptized person who believes in the Trinity and the Incarnation (**which are the simplest components of the Catholic Faith**) and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas holds that man does not have free will (which some Protestants teach). This person would also become a heretic even before he has seen his position condemned by the Church and before he has heard of *other* Catholic dogmas (other than the Trinity and Incarnation) **because he is rejecting a truth which all know to be true from the natural law, namely, that man has a free will**. Thus, he is denying a truth all know about man from the natural law and he is a heretic.

Another example would be if the baptized person who believes in the Trinity and Incarnation (the Catholic Faith in its simplest components) and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas refuses to believe that God is a rewarder and a punisher. This person is a heretic, even though he has never seen that his position is condemned by the Church and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas, because he rejects a truth he knows to be true from the natural law, that God is a rewarder and a punisher of our actions (see Heb. 11:6).

A large majority of Protestants today believe in the doctrines of “faith alone” and “eternal security.” These doctrines contradict both the natural law and reason which says that every man shall be rewarded or punished for his deeds. It also contradicts, word for word, the teaching of James 2 in scripture, which teach that faith without works is dead, and that man is not saved by faith alone. This person who believes in faith alone or eternal security is a heretic, even though he has never seen that his position is condemned by the Church and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas, because he rejects a truth he knows to be true from the natural law, that God is a rewarder and a punisher of our actions, and that faith alone does not justify a man only, but our deeds also.

Other common heresies against the natural law is to hold that birth control or natural family planning, also called nfp, which many “Catholics” practise to avoid conception, (which makes them guilty of the mortal sin of contraception) is acceptable, or if a person is to hold that abortion is acceptable, or if a person is to hold that the consuming of mind altering drugs to the point where the conscience is impeded is acceptable. These examples would all fall under the category of deadly sin, because he is rejecting a truth which all know to be true from the natural law, namely, 1) that abortion is murder, 2) that contraception or nfp deliberately frustrates the natural power to generate life, 3) and that mind altering drugs such as smoking marijuana is a mortal sin, just like getting drunk is.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943:

“For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature **to sever a man** from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.”

We can see that it’s the teaching of the Catholic Church that a man is severed from the Church and Salvation by heresy, schism or apostasy.

The baptized children who reach the age of reason in Protestant, Eastern Schismatic, etc. church buildings and believe in the Trinity and the Incarnation (the essential components of the Catholic Faith) and who don’t reject any Catholic dogma because they don’t know of any other than the Trinity and Incarnation, and who don’t embrace any of the positions like those described above, which are directly incompatible with Faith in God, Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the Natural Law or what they know to be clearly taught in Scripture, would be Catholics in a heretical church building.

THERE IS NO SALVATION FOR MEMBERS OF ISLAM, JUDAISM OR OTHER HERETICAL OR SCHISMATIC NON-CATHOLIC SECTS

So far we’ve seen that it’s an infallibly defined dogma that all who die as non-Catholics,

including all Jews, pagans, heretics, schismatics, etc. cannot be saved. They need to be converted to have salvation. Now we must take a brief look at more of what the Church specifically says about some of the prominent non-Catholic religions, such as Judaism, Islam, and the Protestant and Eastern schismatic sects. This will illustrate, once again, that those who hold that members of non-Catholic religions can be saved are not only going against the solemn declarations that have already been quoted, but also the specific teachings quoted below.

SPECIFIC CATHOLIC TEACHING AGAINST JUDAISM

Jews practice the Old Law and reject the Divinity of Christ and the Trinity. The Jews reject Our Lord Jesus Christ and call him a deceiver, yet many “Christians” say that they are good? This is mind-blowing! The Church teaches the following about the cessation of the Old Law and about all who continue to observe it:

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, 1441, *ex cathedra*: **“The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and teaches that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, the Mosaic law, which are divided into ceremonies, sacred rites, sacrifices, and sacraments... after our Lord’s coming... ceased,** and the sacraments of the New Testament began, and that whoever, even after the passion, placed hope in these matters of the law and submitted himself to them as necessary for salvation, as if faith in Christ could not save without them, **sinned mortally**. All, therefore, who after that time (the promulgation of the Gospel) observe circumcision and the Sabbath (not to be mistaken with the Christian Sabbath) and the other requirements of the law, the holy Roman Church declares alien to the Christian faith and not in the least fit to participate in eternal salvation.”

Many people, who call themselves Catholic, do also boldly assert in contradiction of this infallible statement by Pope Eugene IV in the Council of Florence, that Jews who either reject Christ or who have not found or accepted Christ as their Messiah, can be saved. They also contradict our Lord’s words in the gospel.

John 3:36 “He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. I-II, Q. 103, A. 4: “In like manner the ceremonies of the Old Law betokened Christ as having yet to be born and to suffer: whereas our sacraments signify Him as already born and having suffered. Consequently, just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is yet to be born, which the fathers of old said devoutly and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin now to observe those ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity.”

Pope Benedict XIV, *Ex Quo Primum* (# 61), March 1, 1756:

“The first consideration is that the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law were abrogated by the coming of Christ and that they can no longer be observed without sin after the promulgation of the Gospel.”

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (#'s 29-30), June 29, 1943: “And first of all, by the death of our Redeemer, **the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished...** on the gibbet of His death **Jesus made void the Law with its decrees** [Eph. 2:15]... establishing the New Testament in His blood shed for the whole human race. ‘**To such an extent, then,**’ says St. Leo the Great, speaking of the Cross of our Lord, ‘**was there effected a transfer from the Law to the Gospel, from the Synagogue to the Church,** from many sacrifices to one Victim, that, as our Lord expired, that mystical veil which shut off **the innermost part of the temple and its sacred secret was rent violently from top to bottom.**’ **On the Cross then the Old Law died,** soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death...”

Thus, those who obstinately defends that faithless Jews who reject Christ can be saved and willfully contradict these infallible teachings of the Church, is a heretic, and will receive the full force of the automatic condemnation.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, “Cantate Domino,” 1441, *ex cathedra*: “The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches **that all those who are outside the Catholic Church**, not only pagans but also **Jews** or heretics and schismatics, **cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire** which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives...”

SPECIFIC TEACHING AGAINST ISLAM

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Basel*, Session 19, Sept. 7, 1434: “... there is hope that very many from **the abominable sect of Mahomet** will be converted to the Catholic faith.”

Pope Callixtus III, 1455: “I vow to... exalt the true Faith, and to extirpate **the diabolical sect of the reprobate and faithless Mahomet** [Islam] in the East.”

The Catholic Church considers Islam an “abominable” and “diabolical” sect. [Note: the Council of Basel is only considered ecumenical/approved in the first 25 sessions, as *The Catholic Encyclopedia* points out in Vol. 4, “Councils,” pp. 425-426.] An “abomination” is something that is abhorrent in God’s sight; it’s something that He has no esteem for and no respect for. Something “diabolical” is something of the Devil. Islam rejects, among many other dogmas, the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. Its followers are outside the pale of salvation so long as they remain Muslims.

Pope Clement V, *Council of Vienne*, 1311-1312:

“**It is an insult to the holy name and a disgrace to the Christian faith** that in certain parts of the world subject to Christian princes where Saracens [i.e., the followers of Islam, also called Muslims] live, sometimes apart, sometimes intermingled with Christians, the Saracen priests, commonly called Zabazala, in their temples or mosques, in which the Saracens meet to adore **the infidel Mahomet**, loudly invoke and extol his name each day at certain hours from a high place... There is a place, moreover, where once was buried a certain Saracen whom other Saracens venerate as a saint. **This brings disrepute on our faith and gives great scandal to the faithful. These practices cannot be tolerated without displeasing the**

divine majesty. We therefore, with the sacred council's approval, strictly forbid such practices henceforth in Christian lands. **We enjoin on Catholic princes, one and all...** They are to remove this offense together from their territories and take care that their subjects remove it, so that they may thereby attain the reward of eternal happiness. **They are to forbid expressly the public invocation of the sacrilegious name of Mahomet...** Those who presume to act otherwise are to be so chastised by the princes for their irreverence, that others may be deterred from such boldness."

While the Church teaches that all who die as non-Catholics are lost, it also teaches that no one should be forced to embrace baptism, since belief is a free act of the will.

Pope Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* (#36), Nov. 1, 1885: "And, in fact, the Church is wont to take earnest heed that no one shall be forced to embrace the Catholic faith against his will, for, as St. Augustine wisely reminds us, 'Man cannot believe otherwise than of his own will.'"

The teaching of the *Council of Vienne* that Christian princes should enforce their civil authority to forbid the public expression of the false religion of Islam shows again that Islam is a false religion which leads souls to Hell (not Heaven) and displeases God.

SPECIFIC CATHOLIC TEACHING AGAINST PROTESTANT AND SCHISMATIC SECTS

The Catholic Church also teaches that those baptized persons who embrace heretical or schismatic sects will lose their souls. Jesus founded His Church upon St. Peter, as we saw already, and declared that whoever does not hear the Church be considered as the heathen and publican (Matthew 18:17). He also commanded His followers to observe "all things whatsoever" He has commanded (Matthew 28:20). The Eastern schismatic sects (such as the "Orthodox") and the Protestant sects are breakoff movements that have separated from the Catholic Church. By separating themselves from the one Church of Christ, they leave the path of salvation and enter the path of perdition.

These sects obstinately and pertinaciously reject one or more of the truths that Christ clearly instituted, such as the Papacy (Matthew 16; John 21; etc.), Confession (John 20:23), the Eucharist (John 6:54), and other dogmas of the Catholic Faith. In order to be saved one must assent to all the things which the Catholic Church, based on Scripture and Tradition, has infallibly defined as dogmas of the Faith.

Below are *just a few* of the infallible dogmas of the Catholic Faith which are rejected by Protestants and (in the case of the Papacy) by the Eastern "Orthodox." The Church "anathematizes" (a severe form of excommunication) all who obstinately assert the contrary to its dogmatic definitions.

"To understand the word anathema...we should first go back to the real meaning of *herem* of which it is the equivalent. *Herem* comes from the word *haram*, to cut off, to separate, to curse, and indicates that which is cursed and condemned to be cut off or exterminated, whether a person or a thing, and in consequence, that which man is forbidden to make use of. This is the sense of anathema in the following passage from Deut., vii, 26: 'Neither shalt thou bring anything of the idol into thy house, lest thou become an anathema like it. Thou

shalt detest it as dung, and shalt utterly abhor it as uncleanness and filth, because it is an anathema.””

Thus, a Protestant or an “Eastern Orthodox” who obstinately rejects these dogmatic teachings is anathematized and severed from the Church, outside of which there is no salvation. It’s quite interesting that, in issuing these dogmatic canons, the Church says: “If anyone shall say.... let him be anathema [*anathema sit*]” as opposed to “If anyone shall say... *he is* anathema [*anathema est*].” This qualification of “let him be” allows room for those Catholics who may be unaware of a particular dogma and would conform to the teaching of the canon as soon as it were presented to him. The person who is obstinate, however, and willfully contradicts the dogmatic teaching of the Church receives the full force of the automatic condemnation.

The point here is that if one is able to reject these dogmas and still be saved, *then these infallible definitions and their accompanying anathemas have no meaning, value or force*. But they do have meaning, value and force – they are infallible teachings protected by Jesus Christ. Thus, all who reject these dogmas are anathematized and on the road to damnation.

Pope Pius XI, *Rerum omnium perturbationem* (#4), Jan. 26, 1923: “The saint was no less a person than Francis de Sales... **he seemed to have been sent especially by God to contend against the heresies begotten by the [Protestant] Reformation. It is in these heresies that we discover the beginnings of that apostasy of mankind from the Church**, the sad and disastrous effects of which are deplored, even to the present hour, by every fair mind.”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 13, Can. 1 on the Eucharist, *ex cathedra*:
“**If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist there are truly, really, and substantially contained the Body and Blood** together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ, but shall say that He is in it as by sign or figure, or force, **let him be anathema.**”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 14, Canon 3 on the Sacrament of Penance: “If anyone says that the words of the Lord Savior: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained’ [John 20:22 f.], **are not to be understood of the power remitting and retaining sins in the sacrament of penance... let him be anathema.**”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 14, on Extreme Unction and Penance: “These are the things which this sacred ecumenical synod professes and teaches concerning **the sacraments of penance and extreme unction**, and it sets them forth to be believed and held by all the faithful of Christ. Moreover, the following canons, it says, must be inviolately observed, and **it condemns and anathematizes forever those who assert the contrary.**”

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session 6, Chap. 16, *ex cathedra*:
“**After this Catholic doctrine of justification - which, unless he faithfully and firmly accepts, no one can be justified** - it seemed good to the holy Synod to add these canons, so that all may know, not only what they must hold and follow, but also what they ought to shun and avoid.”

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, Sess. 4, Chap. 3, *ex cathedra*: "... **all the faithful of Christ must believe that the Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff hold primacy over the whole world, and the Pontiff of Rome himself is the successor of the blessed Peter, the chief of the apostles, and is the true vicar of Christ and head of the whole Church...** Furthermore We teach and declare that the Roman Church, by the disposition of the Lord, holds the sovereignty of ordinary power over all others... **This is the doctrine of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate and keep his faith and salvation."**

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

To further show that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation, I will quote numerous infallible statements from the Chair of St. Peter.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Sess. 7, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: **"If anyone says that baptism [the Sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema."**

This infallible dogmatic definition from the Chair of St. Peter condemns anyone who says that the Sacrament of Baptism is not necessary for salvation. The Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for all for salvation, first of all, because, as the Council of Trent defines, all men (except the Blessed Virgin Mary) were conceived in a state of original sin as a result of the sin of Adam, the first man. The Sacrament of Baptism is also necessary for all for salvation because it is the means by which one is marked as a member of Jesus Christ and incorporated into His Mystical Body. And in defining the truth that all men were conceived in the state of Original Sin, the Council of Trent specifically declared that the Blessed Virgin Mary was an exception to its decree on Original Sin. But in defining the truth that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation, the Council of Trent made no exceptions at all.

Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, "Exultate Deo," Nov. 22, 1439: "Holy baptism, which is the gateway to the spiritual life, holds the first place among all the sacraments; through it we are made members of Christ and of the body of the Church. **And since death entered the universe through the first man, 'unless we are born again of water and the Spirit, we cannot,' as the Truth says, 'enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5].** The matter of this sacrament is real and natural water."

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: **"But the sacrament of baptism is consecrated in water at the invocation of the undivided Trinity – namely, Father, Son and Holy Ghost – and brings salvation to both children and adults when it is correctly carried out by anyone in the form laid down by the Church."**

Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (# 15), Dec. 11, 1925 : "Indeed this kingdom is presented in the Gospels as such, into which men prepare to enter by doing penance; **moreover, they cannot enter it except through faith and baptism**, which, although **an external rite**, yet signifies and effects an interior regeneration."

We see here that one cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven without faith and the external rite of baptism (i.e., the Sacrament of Baptism). Ignorant people nowadays contradict this fact and

claim that people can reach heaven without a real and actual water baptism. One could easily understand if a person were ignorant of these facts and believed that a person or infant could be Saved without the sacrament of baptism since many have been wrong on this issue, even Saints. But when one has seen these infallible dogmatic declarations from the Popes, and still obstinately hold to the position that people or infants can be saved without real and actual water baptism, he is a heretic. A heretic is a person who obstinately, willfully and knowingly hold an opinion which he knows to be in opposition with what the Church teach.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex cathedra*: **“If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema.”**

Pope Benedict XIV, *Nuper ad nos*, March 16, 1743, Profession of Faith: **“Likewise (I profess) that baptism is necessary for salvation, and hence, if there is imminent danger of death, it should be conferred at once and without delay, and that it is valid if conferred with the right matter and form and intention by anyone, and at any time.”**

Catechism of the Council of Trent, *Baptism made obligatory after Christ’s Resurrection*, p. 171: **“Holy writers are unanimous in saying that after the Resurrection of our Lord, when He gave His Apostles the command to go and teach all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the law of Baptism became obligatory on all who were to be saved.”**

For a person to assert that salvation can be attained invincibly or ignorantly by Jews, pagans, heretics or schismatics without baptism or the Catholic Faith, is truly an the most evil of doctrine since it renders Faith in Jesus Christ and the true Catholic Faith meaningless. According to this erroneous world view, anyone who is “good” can attain eternal life.

Many people like to object against these truths as “bitter” or “uncharitable.” But this is not true. The “foundation of charity is faith pure and undefiled” (Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, #9). Some will also say that they cannot understand the justice behind these infallible declarations by God through the Popes. But it is not our job to question God’s laws and decrees. Our job is to believe first and understand second. Yet, if one looks at this situation clearly, one can understand the justice behind it. Adam and Eve brought death and original sin on every human being through their sin of eating the forbidden fruit. Did they fall for just desiring the fruit? NO! They fell after eating a real physical fruit. If you cannot accept that all of humanity must be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, how can you accept that all of humanity fell into sin because of Adam and Eve ate a physical fruit?

Here are some very relevant quotes from the Revelations of St. Bridget that describes the power of a real baptism and how real water must be joined to the sacrament of baptism for baptism to be efficacious:

“The Mother appeared again and said: “My son, you still have need of a horse and saddle. The spiritual signification of the horse is baptism. Just as a horse has its four legs and carries a man on the journey he must accomplish, so too baptism, as signified by the horse, carries a

man in the sight of God and has four spiritual effects. The first effect is that the baptized are liberated from the devil and bound to the commandments and service of God. The second effect is that they are cleansed from original sin. The third is that they are made God's children and coheirs. The fourth is that heaven is opened to them.

Yet how many there are today who, having reached the age of reason, pull the reins on the horse of baptism and ride it off on a false path! The baptismal path is true and rightly followed when people are instructed and upheld in good moral habits before reaching the age of reason and when, upon reaching the age of reason and carefully considering what was promised at the baptismal font, they keep their faith and love of God intact. However, they ride away from the right path and rein the horse in when they prefer the world and the flesh to God.

The saddle of the horse or of baptism is the effect of the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, which gave baptism its efficacy. What is water if not an element? As soon as God's blood was poured out, God's word and the power of God's outpoured blood entered into the element. Thus, by the word of God, the water of baptism became the means of reconciliation between humankind and God, the gate of mercy, the expulsion of demons, the way to heaven, and the forgiveness of sins. So those who would boast of the power of baptism should first consider how the effect of baptism was instituted through bitter pain. When their mind swells up with pride against God, let them consider how bitter their redemption was, how many times they have broken their baptismal vows, and what they deserve for their relapses into sin." *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4, Chapter 74*

As we can read from this splendid teaching by our Holy Mother, the water received the blood of our Lord when he died for our sins, and that is why the water can have such a great efficacy that it can even wash away original sin when it is used with the invocation of the name of the Holy Trinity. Here comes another good example from St. Bridget's revelations about the efficacy of baptism:

Christ describes why a three year old boy is tormented by a demon: "And even though the boy is born by the seed of the father and mother, the devil still has the greatest power over him, for he is not reborn through the true baptism, but is only baptized in the way that women are accustomed to baptize, who do not know about the words of the Holy Trinity. That is why the boy may be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; then he will be cured."

BELIEVE DOGMA AS IT WAS ONCE DECLARED

There is only one way to believe dogma: as holy mother Church has once declared.

Pope Pius IX, *First Vatican Council*, Sess. 3, Chap. 2 on Revelation, 1870, *ex cathedra*:
"Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be a recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding."

One of the main problems with most traditional "Catholic" groups and the heretical Second Vatican Council - the Vatican II "Church" - is the constant and obstinate deviation from the

true literal meaning as the dogmas once was infallibly declared. As we learn above, there can never be a recession from the true meaning of the dogmas as they were once declared *under the specious name of deeper understanding*. Thus we are forced to accept the dogmas as they are written under pain of mortal sin.

This definition of the First Vatican Council is critically important for dogmatic purity, because the primary way the Devil attempts to corrupt Christ's doctrines is by getting men to recede (move away) from the Church's dogmas *as they were once declared*. There is no meaning of a dogma other than what the **words themselves state and declare**, so the Devil tries to get men to "understand" and "interpret" these words in a way that is different from how holy mother Church has declared them.

Many of us have dealt with people who have attempted to explain away the clear meaning of the definitions on Outside the Church There is No Salvation by saying, "you must understand them." What they really mean is that you must understand them in a way *different from what the words themselves state and declare*. And this is precisely what the First Vatican Council condemns. It condemns their moving away from the understanding of a dogma which holy mother Church has once declared to a different meaning, under the specious (false) name of a "deeper understanding."

Besides those who argue that we must "understand" dogmas in a different way than what the words themselves state and declare, there are those who, when presented with the dogmatic definitions on Outside the Church There is No Salvation, say, "that is your interpretation." They belittle the words of a dogmatic formula to nothing other than one's private interpretation. And this also is heresy. For it is not our own interpretation which defines the dogmas, the dogmas define themselves, as have been shown. A person claiming otherwise will make himself guilty of bearing false witness. And this also is mortal sin.

THOSE WHO DIE IN ORIGINAL SIN OR MORTAL SIN DESCEND INTO HELL

As I have proven above, there is no possible way for children to be freed from original sin other than through the Sacrament of Baptism. This, of course, proves that there is no way for infants to be saved other than through the Sacrament of Baptism. So the following definitions merely affirm what has already been established: no child can possibly enter the kingdom of Heaven without receiving water baptism, but will rather descend into Hell.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Letentur coeli," Sess. 6, July 6, 1439, *ex cathedra*:
"We define also that... **the souls of those who depart this life in actual mortal sin, or in original sin alone, go straightaway to hell**, but to undergo punishments of different kinds."

Pope Pius VI, *Auctorem fidei*, Aug. 28, 1794:

"26. **The doctrine which rejects as a Pelagian fable, that place of the lower regions (which the faithful generally designate by the name of the limbo of the children) in which the souls of those departing with the sole guilt of original sin are punished with the punishment of the condemned, exclusive of the punishment of fire**, just as if, by this very fact, that these who remove the punishment of fire introduced that middle place and state free of guilt and of punishment between the kingdom of God and eternal damnation, such as

that about which the Pelagians idly talk” – **Condemned** as false, rash, injurious to Catholic schools.

Here Pope Pius VI condemns the idea of some theologians that infants who die in original sin suffer the fires of Hell. At the same time, he confirms that these infants do go to a part of the lower regions (i.e., Hell) called the limbo of the children. They do not go to Heaven, but to a place in Hell where there is no fire. This is perfectly in accord with all of the other solemn definitions of the Church, which teach that infants who die without water baptism descend into Hell, but suffer a punishment different from those who die in mortal sin. Their punishment is eternal separation from God.

Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge* (# 25), March 14, 1937: “**Original sin**’ is the hereditary but impersonal fault of Adam’s descendants, who have sinned in him (Rom. v. 12). **It is the loss of grace, and therefore eternal life**, together with a propensity to evil, which everybody must, with the assistance of grace, penance, resistance and moral effort, repress and conquer.”

THE UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN AND THE LIMBO OF THE CHILDREN

The Catholic Church teaches that aborted children and infants who die without baptism descend immediately into Hell, but that they do not suffer the fires of Hell. They go to a place in Hell called the limbo of the children. The most specific definition of the Church proving that there is no possible way for an infant to be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism is the following one from Pope Eugene IV.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Session 11, Feb. 4, 1442, *ex cathedra*: “**Regarding children**, indeed, because of danger of death, which can often take place, **when no help can be brought to them by another remedy than through the sacrament of baptism**, through which they are snatched from the domination of the Devil [original sin] and adopted among the sons of God, it advises that holy baptism ought not be deferred for forty or eighty days, or any time according to the observance of certain people...” (Denz. 712)

Pope Eugene IV here defined *from the Chair of Peter* that there is *no other remedy* for infants to be snatched away from the dominion of the devil (i.e., original sin) other than the Sacrament of Baptism. This means that anyone who obstinately teaches that infants can be saved without receiving the Sacrament of Baptism is a heretic, for he is teaching that there is *another remedy* for original sin in children other than the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Martin V, *Council of Constance*, Session 15, July 6, 1415 - Condemning the articles of John Wyclif - Proposition 6: “**Those who claim that the children of the faithful dying without sacramental baptism will not be saved, are stupid and presumptuous in saying this.**” - **Condemned**

The arch-heretic John Wyclif was proposing that those (such as ourselves) are stupid for teaching that infants who die without *water* (i.e., *sacramental*) baptism cannot possibly be saved. He was anathematized for this assertion, among many others. And here is what the Council of Constance had to say about John Wyclif’s anathematized propositions, such as #6 above.

Pope Martin V, *Council of Constance*, Session 15, July 6, 1415: “The books and pamphlets of John Wyclif, of cursed memory, were carefully examined by the doctors and masters of Oxford University... **This holy synod, therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, repudiates and condemns, by this perpetual decree, the aforesaid articles and each of them in particular; and it forbids each and every Catholic henceforth, under pain of anathema, to preach, teach, or hold the said articles or any one of them.**”

So those who criticize Catholics for affirming the dogma that no infant can be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism are actually proposing the anathematized heresy of John Wyclif. Here are some other dogmatic definitions on the topic:

Pope St. Zosimus, *The Council of Carthage*, Canon on Sin and Grace, 417 A.D.- **“It has been decided likewise that if anyone says that for this reason the Lord said: ‘In my Father’s house there are many mansions’ [John 14:2]: that it might be understood that in the kingdom of heaven there will be some middle place or some place anywhere where the blessed infants live who departed from this life without baptism, without which they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, which is life eternal, let him be anathema.”** (Denz. 102, authentic addition to canon 2.)

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, On Original Sin, Session V, *ex cathedra*: “If anyone says that recently born babies should not be baptized even if they have been born to baptized parents; **or says that they are indeed baptized for the remission of sins, but incur no trace of the original sin of Adam needing to be cleansed by the laver of rebirth for them to obtain eternal life**, with the necessary consequence that in their case there is being understood a form of baptism for the remission of sins which is not true, but false: **let him be anathema.**” (Denz. 791)

This means that anyone who asserts that infants don’t need the “laver of rebirth” (water baptism) to attain eternal life is teaching heresy. St. Augustine was perhaps the most outspoken proponent of the apostolic truth that infants who die without Baptism are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven (since they have original sin).

St. Augustine, A.D. 415: **“Anyone who would say that infants who pass from this life without participation in the Sacrament [of Baptism] shall be made alive in Christ truly goes counter to the preaching of the Apostle and condemns the whole Church**, where there is great haste in baptizing infants because it is believed without doubt that there is no other way at all in which they can be made alive in Christ.” (Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2016.)

The Revelations of St. Bridget also corroborates this infallible dogmatic truth revealed by God in Book 5, Interrogation 6:

First question. Again he appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does one infant emerge alive from the mother's womb and obtain baptism, while another, having received a soul, dies in the mother's belly?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "You ask why one infant dies in the

mother's belly while another emerges alive. There is a reason. All the strength of the child's body comes, of course, from the seed of its father and mother; however, if it is conceived without due strength, because of some weakness of its father or mother, it dies quickly. As a result of the negligence or carelessness of the parents as well as of my divine justice, many times it happens that what was joined together comes apart quickly.

Yet a soul is not brought to the harshest punishment for this reason, however little time it had for giving life to the body, but, rather, it comes to the mercy that is known to me. Just as the sun shining into a house is not seen as it is in its beauty - only those who look into the sky see its rays - so too the souls of such children, though they do not see my face for lack of baptism, are nevertheless closer to my mercy than to punishment, but not in the same way as my elect." - *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 5, Interrogation 6, Question 1*

More proof:

“But consider my goodness and mercy! For, as the teacher says, I give virtue to those who do not have any virtue. By reason of my great love I give the kingdom of heaven to all of the baptized who die before reaching the age of discretion. As it is written: It has pleased my Father to give the kingdom of heaven to such as these. By reason of my tender love, I even show mercy to the infants of pagans. If any of them die before reaching the age of discretion, given that they cannot come to know me face to face, they go instead to a place that it is not permitted for you to know but where they will live without suffering.” - *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 2, Chapter 1*

These fascinating sentences clearly affirm infallible Catholic dogma by teaching that no one can see God's face without water baptism. Yet, they also give us explicit confirmation that these children are in a state of light and mercy, though not in the same way as those in Heaven.

BAPTISM OF BLOOD AND BAPTISM OF DESIRE – ERRONEOUS TRADITIONS OF MAN

In this document, I have shown that the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation. I have also shown that it is only through receiving the Sacrament of Baptism that one is incorporated into the Catholic Church, outside of which there is no salvation. I have also shown that the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that the words of Jesus Christ in John 3:5 – *Amen, amen I say unto thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* – are to be understood literally: as they are written. **This is the infallible teaching of the Church and it excludes any possibility of salvation without being born again of water and the Holy Ghost.**

However, throughout the history of the Church, many have believed in the theories called baptism of desire and baptism of blood: that one's desire for the Sacrament of Baptism or one's martyrdom for the faith supplies for the lack of being born again of water and the Holy Ghost. Those who believe in baptism of blood and baptism of desire raise certain objections to the absolute necessity of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism for salvation. I will respond to some of the major objections made by baptism of desire and blood advocates; and in the

process, I will give an overview of the history of the errors of baptism of desire and baptism of blood. In doing this I will demonstrate that neither baptism of blood nor baptism of desire is a teaching of the Catholic Church.

THE FATHERS ARE UNANIMOUS FROM THE BEGINNING

The Fathers (or prominent early Christian Catholic writers) are unanimous from the beginning that no one enters heaven or is freed from original sin without water baptism.

In 140 A.D., the early Church Father Hermas quotes Jesus in John 3:5, and writes:

“They had need to come up through the water, so that they might be made alive; **for they could not otherwise enter into the kingdom of God.**”

This statement is obviously a paraphrase of John 3:5, and thus it demonstrates that from the very beginning of the apostolic age it was held and taught by the fathers that no one enters heaven without being *born again of water and the Spirit* based specifically on Our Lord Jesus Christ’s declaration in John 3:5.

In 155 A.D., St. Justin the Martyr writes:

“... they are led by us to a place where there is water; and there they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn... in the name of God... they receive the washing of water. For Christ said, ‘***Unless you be reborn, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***’ The reason for doing this we have learned from the apostles.”

Notice that St. Justin Martyr, like Hermas, also quotes the words of Jesus in John 3:5, and based on Christ’s words he teaches that it is from apostolic tradition that no one at all can enter Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism.

In his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, also dated 155 A.D., St. Justin Martyr further writes:

“... hasten to learn in what way forgiveness of sins and a hope of the inheritance... may be yours. **There is no other way than this: acknowledge Christ, be washed in the washing announced by Isaias [Baptism]**...”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.:

“He says, ‘*Unless a man be born again*’ – and He adds the words ‘*of water and the Spirit*’ – *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*.....if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but does not receive the seal by means of the water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven. **A bold saying, but not mine; for it is Jesus who has declared it.**”

We see that St. Cyril continues the apostolic Tradition that no one enters heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit, based again on an absolute understanding Our Lord's own words in John 3:5.

Pope St. Damasus, 382 A.D.:

“This, then, is the salvation of Christians: that believing in the Trinity, that is, in the Father, and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, **and baptized in it...**”

St. Ambrose, 387 A.D.:

“... no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven except through the Sacrament of Baptism.”

St. Ambrose, 387 A.D.:

“‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ No one is excepted: not the infant, not the one prevented by some necessity.”

St. Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, 390-391 A.D.:

“You have read, therefore, that the three witnesses in Baptism are one: water, blood, and the spirit; and if you withdraw any one of these, the Sacrament of Baptism is not valid. For what is water without the cross of Christ? A common element without any sacramental effect. **Nor on the other hand is there any mystery of regeneration without water: for ‘unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ [John 3:5]** **Even a catechumen** believes in the cross of the Lord Jesus, by which also he is signed; but, unless he be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, he cannot receive the remission of sins nor be recipient of the gift of spiritual grace.”

St. John Chrysostom, 392 A.D.:

“Weep for the unbelievers; weep for those who differ not a whit from them, those **who go hence without illumination, without the seal! ... They are outside the royal city.... with the condemned. ‘Amen, I tell you, if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’”**

St Augustine, 395 A.D.:

“... God does not forgive sins except to the baptized.”

Pope St. Innocent, 414 A.D.:

“But that which Your Fraternity asserts the Pelagians preach, that even without the grace of Baptism infants are able to be endowed with the rewards of eternal life, is quite idiotic.”

Pope St. Gregory the Great, c. 590 A.D.:

“Forgiveness of sin is bestowed on us only by the baptism of Christ.”

Theophylactus, Patriarch of Bulgaria, c. 800 A.D.:

“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. It does not suffice to believe; he who believes, and is not yet baptized, but is only a catechumen, has not yet fully acquired salvation.”

Many other passages could be quoted from the fathers, but it is a fact that the fathers of the Church are unanimous from the beginning of the apostolic age that no one at all can be saved without receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, based on the words of Jesus Christ in John 3:5. The eminent Patristic Scholar Fr. William Jurgens, who has literally read thousands of texts from the fathers, was *forced* to admit the following (even though he believes in baptism of desire) in his three volume set on the fathers of the Church.

Fr. William Jurgens: **“If there were not a constant tradition in the Fathers that the Gospel message of ‘*Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*’ is to be taken absolutely**, it would be easy to say that Our Savior simply did not see fit to mention the obvious exceptions of invincible ignorance and physical impossibility. **But the tradition in fact is there; and it is likely enough to be found so constant as to constitute revelation.”**

The eminent scholar Fr. Jurgens is admitting here three important things:

- 1) The fathers are constant in their teaching that John 3:5 is absolute with no exceptions; that is, no one at all enters heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit;
- 2) The fathers are so constant on this point that it likely constitutes divine revelation, without even considering the infallible teaching of the popes;
- 3) The constant teaching of the fathers that all must receive water baptism for salvation in light of John 3:5 excludes exceptions for the “invincibly ignorant” or “physically impossible” cases.

And based on this truth, declared by Jesus in the Gospel (John 3:5), handed down by the Apostles and taught by the fathers, the Catholic Church has infallibly defined as a dogma (as we have seen already) that no one at all enters heaven without the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Canon 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (John. 3:5): let him be anathema.**”

NOT ALL OF THE FATHERS REMAINED CONSISTENT WITH THEIR OWN AFFIRMATION

Despite the fact that there is a constant tradition from the beginning that no one at all is saved without water baptism, not all of the fathers always remained consistent with their own affirmation on this point. **And that is where we come across the theories of “baptism of blood” and “baptism of desire.”** It must be understood that the fathers of the Church were mistaken and inconsistent with their own teaching and the apostolic Tradition on many points – since they were fallible men who made many errors.

The fathers of the Church are only a definite witness to Tradition when expressing a point held universally and constantly or when expressing something that is in line with defined dogma. Taken individually or even in multiplicity, they can be dead wrong and even dangerous. St. Basil the Great said that the Holy Ghost is second to the Son of God in order and dignity, in a horrible and even heretical attempt to explain the Holy Trinity.

St. Basil (363): “The Son is not, however, second to the Father in nature, because the Godhead is one in each of them, and plainly, too, in the Holy Spirit, even if in order and dignity He is second to the Son (yes, this we do concede!), though not in such a way, it is clear, that He were of another nature.”

When St. Basil says above that the Godhead is one in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he is correctly affirming the universal, apostolic Tradition. But when he says that the Holy Spirit is second in *dignity* to the Son he ceases to remain consistent with this Tradition and falls into error (material heresy, in fact). And the fathers made countless errors in attempting to defend or articulate the Faith.

St. Augustine wrote an entire book of corrections. St. Fulgentius and a host of others, including St. Augustine, held that it was certain that infants who die without *baptism descend into the fires of Hell*, a position that was later condemned by Pope Pius VI. As Pope Pius VI confirmed, unbaptized infants go to Hell, but to a place in Hell where there is no fire.

But St. Augustine was so outspoken in favor of this error that it became the common and basically unchallenged teaching for more than 500 years, according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 9, “Limbo,” p. 257: “**On the special question, however, of the punishment of original sin after death, St. Anselm was at one with St. Augustine in holding that unbaptized infants share in the positive sufferings of the damned; and Abelard was the first to rebel against the severity of the Augustinian tradition on this point.**”

This is why Catholics don't form definite doctrinal conclusions from the teaching of a father of the Church or a handful of fathers; a Catholic goes by the infallible teaching of the Church proclaimed by the popes; and a Catholic assents to the teaching of the fathers of the Church when they are in universal and constant agreement from the beginning and in line with Catholic dogmatic teaching.

Pope Benedict XIV, *Apostolica* (# 6), June 26, 1749: **"The Church's judgment is preferable to that of a Doctor** renowned for his holiness and teaching."

Errors of the Jansenists, #30: **"When anyone finds a doctrine clearly established in Augustine, he can absolutely hold it and teach it, disregarding any bull of the pope."**- **Condemned by Pope Alexander VIII**

Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (# 21), Aug. 12, 1950: **"This deposit of faith our Divine Redeemer has given for authentic interpretation not to each of the faithful, not even to theologians, but only to the Teaching Authority of the Church."**

The Catholic Church recognizes infallibility in no saint, theologian or early Church father. It is only a pope operating with the authority of the Magisterium who is protected by the Holy Ghost from teaching error on faith or morals. So, when we examine and show how Churchmen have erred on the topics of baptism of desire and blood this is 100% consistent with the teaching of the Church, which has always acknowledged that any Churchman, no matter how great, can make errors, even significant ones.

THE THEORY OF BAPTISM OF BLOOD – A TRADITION OF MAN

A small number of the fathers – **approximately 8 out of a total of hundreds** – are quoted in favor of what is called "baptism of blood," the idea that a catechumen (that is, one preparing to receive Catholic Baptism) who shed his blood for Christ could be saved without having received Baptism. It is crucial to note at the beginning that **none of the fathers considered anyone but a catechumen as a possible exception to receiving the Sacrament of Baptism; they would all condemn and reject as heretical and foreign to the teaching of Christ the modern heresy of "invincible ignorance"** saving those who die as non-Catholics. So, out of the fathers, approximately 8 are quoted in favor of baptism of blood for catechumens. And, **only 1 father out of hundreds, St. Augustine, can be quoted as clearly teaching what is today called "baptism of desire":** the idea that a catechumen could be saved by his explicit desire for water baptism. This means that with the exception of St. Augustine, all of the few fathers who believed in baptism of blood actually rejected the concept of baptism of desire. Take St. Cyril of Jerusalem, for example.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.: **"If any man does not receive baptism, he does not receive salvation. The only exception is the martyrs..."**

Here we see that St. Cyril of Jerusalem believed in baptism of blood, but rejected baptism of desire. St. Fulgence expressed the same.

St. Fulgence, 523: “From that time at which Our Savior said: “*If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,*’ no one can, without the sacrament of baptism, except those who, in the Catholic Church, without Baptism pour out their blood for Christ...”

Here we see that St. Fulgence believed in baptism of blood but rejected the idea of baptism of desire. And what’s ironic and particularly dishonest is that the baptism of desire apologists (such as the priests of the Society of St. Pius X) will quote these patristic texts (such as the two above) in books written to prove *baptism of desire*, without pointing out to their readers that these passages actually deny baptism of desire; for we can see that St. Fulgence, while expressing belief in baptism of blood, rejects baptism of desire, only allowing martyrs as a possible exception to receiving baptism. (What would St. Fulgence say about the modern version of the heresy of baptism of desire, also taught by such priests of the SSPX, SSPV, CMRI, etc. whereby Jews, Muslims, Hindus and pagans can be saved without Baptism?)

It is also important to point out that some of the fathers use the term “baptism of blood” to describe the Catholic martyrdom of one already baptized, not as a possible replacement for water baptism. This is the only legitimate use of the term.

St. John Chrysostom, *Panegyric on St. Lucian*, 4th Century AD:

“Do not be surprised that I call martyrdom a Baptism; for here too the Spirit comes in great haste and there is a taking away of sins and a wonderful and marvelous cleansing of the soul; and just as those being baptized are washed in water, so too those being martyred are washed in their own blood.”

St. John is here describing the martyrdom of a priest St. Lucian, a person already baptized. He is not saying that martyrdom replaces baptism. St. John Damascene describes it the same way:

St. John Damascene:

“These things were well understood by our holy and inspired fathers --- thus they strove, after Holy Baptism, to keep... spotless and undefiled. Whence some of them also thought fit to receive another Baptism: I mean that which is by blood and martyrdom.”

This is important because many dishonest scholars today (such as the priests of the Society of St. Pius X) will distort the teaching on this point; they will quote a passage on baptism of blood where St. John is simply speaking of baptism of blood as a Catholic martyrdom for one already baptized, and they will present it as if the person were teaching that martyrdom can replace baptism – when such is not stated anywhere.

Some may wonder why the term *baptism of blood* was used at all. I believe that the reason the term “baptism of blood” was used by some of the fathers was because Our Lord described His coming passion as a baptism in Mark 10:38-39.

[Mark 10:38-39]: “And Jesus said to them: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I drink of: or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized? But they

said to him: We can. And Jesus saith to them: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of: and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, you shall be baptized.”

We see in the aforementioned passage that Our Lord, although already baptized by St. John in the Jordan, refers to another baptism which He must receive. This is His martyrdom on the cross, not a substitute for baptism of water. It is His “second baptism,” if you will, not his first. Thus, baptism of blood is described by Our Lord in the same way as St. John Damascene, not to mean a substitute baptism for an unbaptized person, but rather a Catholic martyrdom which remits all the fault and punishment due to sin.

The term *baptism* is used in a variety of ways in the scriptures and by the Church fathers. The baptisms: of water, of blood, of the spirit, of Moses, and of fire are all terms that have been implemented by Church Fathers to characterize certain things, but not necessarily to describe that an unbaptized martyr can attain salvation. Read the verse of scripture in which the term *baptism* is used for the Old Testament forefathers:

[1Cor. 10:2-4]: “And all in Moses were BAPTIZED, in the cloud, and in the sea: And did all eat the same spiritual food, And all drank the same spiritual drink: (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.)”

I believe this explains why a number of fathers **erred** in believing that baptism of blood supplies the place of baptism of water. They recognized that Our Lord referred to His own martyrdom as a baptism, and they erroneously concluded that martyrdom for the true faith can serve as a substitute for being born again of water and the Holy Ghost. But the reality is that there are no exceptions to Our Lord’s words in John 3:5, as the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church confirms. **Anyone of good will who is willing to shed his blood for the true faith will not be left without these saving waters. It is not our blood, but Christ’s blood on the Cross, communicated to us in the Sacrament of Baptism, which frees us from the state of sin and allows us entrance into the kingdom of Heaven.**

Pope Eugene IV, “Cantate Domino,” *Council of Florence, ex cathedra*: “**No one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has persevered within the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.**”

SUMMARIZING THE FACTS ON BAPTISM OF BLOOD

As stated already, the theory of baptism of blood has never been taught by one pope, one council or in any Papal Encyclical. At least 5 dogmatic councils of the Catholic Church issued detailed definitions on Baptism, and not one ever mentioned the concept or the term baptism of blood. The Council of Trent had 14 canons on Baptism, and baptism of blood is mentioned nowhere. And, in fact, various infallible statements from the popes and councils exclude the idea.

Pope Eugene IV, “Cantate Domino,” *Council of Florence, ex cathedra*: “**No one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has persevered within the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.**”

Pope Eugene IV explicitly excludes from salvation even those who “shed blood for the name of Christ” unless they are living within the bosom and unity of the Church! And, as proven already, the unbaptized are not living within the bosom and unity of the Church (*de fide*)! The unbaptized are not subjects of the Catholic Church (*de fide, Council of Trent*, Sess. 14, Chap. 2); the unbaptized are not members of the Catholic Church (*de fide, Pius XII, Mystici Corporis* # 22); and the unbaptized do not have the mark of Christians (*de fide, Pius XII, Mediator Dei* # 43).

If “baptism of blood” truly served as a substitute for the Sacrament of Baptism, God would never have allowed the Catholic Church to understand John 3:5 *as it is written* in its infallible decrees, as He has (Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, “Exultate Deo,” Nov. 22, 1439, etc.). This is certain, because the Church’s official understanding of the scriptures cannot err.

Furthermore, God would never have allowed the infallible Council of Trent to completely pass over any mention of this “exception” in its canons on baptism and its chapters on justification as an alternative way of achieving the state of grace. He would never have allowed all of the infallible definitions from popes on *only one baptism* to avoid any mention of “the baptism of blood.”

And God would not have allowed Pope Eugene IV to define that nobody, even *if he has shed blood in the name of Christ, can be saved unless he is in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church*, without mentioning the exception of “baptism of blood.” **God has never allowed the theory of baptism of blood to be taught in one council, by one pope, or in one infallible decree, but only by fallible theologians and fallible early Church fathers.** All of this is because baptism of blood is not a teaching of the Catholic Church, but the erroneous speculation of certain fathers who also erred frequently in the same documents. Besides, there would be no need for God to save anyone by baptism of blood (or “baptism of desire”), since He can keep any sincere souls alive until they are baptized.

THE THEORY OF BAPTISM OF DESIRE – A TRADITION OF MAN

Those who have been brainwashed by apologists for the theory of baptism of desire may be surprised to learn that of all the fathers of the Church, **only 1 can even be brought forward by baptism of desire advocates as having taught the concept.** That’s correct, only one, St. Augustine. The baptism of desire advocates will make a feeble attempt to bring forward a second father, St. Ambrose, as we will see; but even if that were true, that would make only two fathers out of hundreds who can be quoted as ever having speculated on the concept of baptism of desire. So then, what is one to say about the following statements of the priests of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), who have written three separate books on “baptism of desire”?

Fr. Jean-Marc Rulleau (SSPX), *Baptism of Desire*, p. 63: “This baptism of desire makes up for the want of sacramental baptism... The existence of this mode of salvation is a truth taught by the Magisterium of the Church and held from the first centuries **by all the Fathers.** **No Catholic theologian has contested it.**”

Fr. Francois Laisney (SSPX), *Is Feeneyism Catholic?*, p. 79, on Baptism of desire: “**It is not**

only the common teaching, but unanimous teaching; it is not only since the early part of this millennium, but rather from the beginning of the Church...”

These statements are totally false and grievous lies which completely misrepresent the teaching of Tradition and corrupt people’s faith, as we already have seen. **The fathers are unanimously *against*** the concept that anyone (including a catechumen) could be saved without water baptism. But let us examine the teaching of the one father, St. Augustine, who did express belief (at least at times) in the idea that a catechumen could be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism by his desire for it.

ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

St. Augustine is quoted in favor of the concept of baptism of desire, but he admittedly struggled with the issue, sometimes clearly opposing the idea that unbaptized **catechumens** could achieve salvation, and other times supporting it.

St. Augustine, 400: “That the place of Baptism is sometimes supplied by suffering is supported by a substantial argument which the same Blessed Cyprian draws...**Considering this over and over again, I find** that not only suffering for the name of Christ can supply for that which is lacking by way of Baptism, but even faith and conversion of heart, if... recourse cannot be had to the celebration of the Mystery of Baptism.”

There are two interesting points about this passage. The first relates to baptism of blood: notice that Augustine says that his belief in baptism of blood is supported by an inference or an argument that St. Cyprian made, not anything rooted in the Tradition of the Apostles or the Roman Pontiffs.

St. Cyprian, *To Jubaianus* (254): “... *in regard to what I might think in the matter of the baptism of heretics... This baptism we cannot reckon as valid...*”

As we saw already, many of the inferences of St. Cyprian showed themselves to be quite wrong, to put it nicely, such as his “inference” that it was from “apostolic Tradition” that heretics cannot confer baptism, which is wrong, since even heretics can baptize validly. Thus, St. Augustine is revealing by this statement a very important point: **that his belief even in baptism of blood is rooted in fallible human speculation, not in divine revelation or infallible Tradition. He is admitting that he could be wrong and, in fact, he is wrong.**

Secondly, when Augustine concludes that he also believes that faith (that is, faith in Catholicism) and a desire for baptism could have the same effect as martyrdom, he says: “*Considering this over and over again...*” By saying that he considered this over and over again, St. Augustine is admitting that his opinion on *baptism of desire* is also something that he has come to from his own consideration, not through infallible Tradition or teaching. It is something that he admittedly struggled with and contradicted himself on. All of this serves to prove again that baptism of desire, like baptism of blood, is a tradition of man, born in erroneous and fallible human speculation (albeit from some great men), and not rooted in or derived from any Tradition of the Apostles or of the popes.

Out of the hundreds of fathers of the Church, the only other one that the baptism of desire advocates *even try* to quote is St. Ambrose. They think that in his funeral speech for his friend (the Emperor Valentinian) he taught that the emperor (who was only a catechumen) was saved by his desire for baptism. But St. Ambrose's funeral speech for Valentinian is extremely ambiguous and could be interpreted in a variety of ways. It is thus gratuitous for them to assert that it clearly teaches the idea of "baptism of desire."

LITURGICAL TRADITION AND APOSTOLIC BURIAL TRADITION

Besides these clear testimonies of the fathers against the theory of baptism of desire, perhaps most striking is the fact that in the history of the Catholic Church **there is not a single tradition that can be cited for praying for – or giving ecclesiastical burial to – catechumens who died without baptism.** *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907) had the following to say about the actual Tradition of the Church in this regard:

"A certain statement in the funeral oration of St. Ambrose over the Emperor Valentinian II has been brought forward as a proof that the Church offered sacrifices and prayers for catechumens who died before baptism. **There is not a vestige of such a custom to be found anywhere...** The practice of the Church is more correctly shown in the canon (xvii) of the Second Council of Braga (572 AD): 'Neither the commemoration of Sacrifice [oblationis] nor the service of chanting [psallendi] is to be employed for catechumens who have died without baptism.'"

There you have the teaching of Catholic Tradition! No catechumen who died without the Sacrament of Baptism received prayer, sacrifice or Christian burial! The Council of Braga, in 572 A.D., forbade prayer for catechumens who died without Baptism. Pope St. Leo the Great and Pope St. Gelasius had earlier confirmed the same Church discipline – which was the universal practice – forbidding Catholics to pray for unbaptized catechumens who had died. **This means that the belief in the early Church was that there was no such thing as baptism of desire.** The theory of baptism of desire didn't become a widespread belief until the middle ages, when St. Thomas Aquinas and some other eminent theologians made it their own, which caused many theologians to subsequently adopt that position out of deference to them, a position on the possible salvation of catechumens who died without baptism which was contrary to the overwhelming belief and liturgical tradition of the early Church, not to mention the Church's later infallible teaching on the scripture John 3:5.

The true teaching of apostolic and Catholic tradition on this topic is also seen from the teaching of the Catholic Liturgy, which all worshipping Catholics in the early Church acknowledged and believed: namely, that no unbaptized catechumen or unbaptized person was considered part of *the faithful*. That unbaptized catechumens are not part of the faithful was held by all of the fathers because it was taught to all Catholics in the liturgy.

Dr. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Membership in the Church, p. 309: "3. The Fathers draw a sharp line of separation between Catechumens and 'the faithful.'"

This means that no unbaptized person can be saved, because Catholic dogma has defined that

no one is saved outside the one Church of the faithful.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio*, May 27, 1832, on no salvation outside the Church: “Official acts of the Church proclaim the same dogma. Thus, in the decree on faith which Innocent III published with the synod of Lateran IV, these things are written: ‘***There is one universal Church of all the faithful outside of which no one is saved.***’”

POPE ST. SIRICIUS (384-398)

In his letter to the Bishop of Tarragona in the year 385, Pope St. Siricius also shows how the belief in the early Church rejected any concept of baptism of desire.

Pope St. Siricius, 385, [Concerning the necessity of baptism] “Therefore just as we declare that respect for the Easter sacrifice [Paschal time] should not be lessened in the case of any person, in like manner **we wish help to be brought with all speed to children who because of their age cannot yet speak, and to those who in any emergency are in need of the water of holy baptism, lest it should lead to the destruction of our souls if, by refusing the water of salvation to those who desire it, each of them, when taking leave of this world, should lose both the kingdom and life.** Indeed whoever suffers the peril of shipwreck, an enemy attack, the danger of siege or desperation resulting from some bodily infirmity, and so **asks for what in their faith is their only help, let them receive at the moment of their request the reward of regeneration that they beg for.** This much should suffice for my digression on this subject; now let all priests who do not wish to be wrenched from the firmly-fixed rock of the apostles, on which Christ built his universal church, hold fast to the aforesaid rule.” (Latin found in Denzinger-Schönmetzner, Latin Edition, 1962, no. 184; an English Translation found in *The Christian Faith*, Sixth Revised and Enlarged Edition, Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1996, p. 540.)

I hope that the baptism of desire advocates read this one very carefully. The Pope declares that the man who begs for regeneration and desires water baptism is still denied heaven if he dies without it! This quotation from Pope St. Siricius is striking in that it again clearly shows how the early Church rejected belief in the concept of baptism of desire. The Pope begins by affirming that the observance of Paschal time should not be relaxed. (He is referring to the fact that Baptisms were historically performed during Paschal time.) **After affirming that this tradition should be maintained, the Pope warns that infants and those in any necessity or danger should be baptized immediately, lest those who desire baptism die and are “deprived of the Kingdom and life” for not having received water baptism** which they desired. This is a clear rejection of the idea of baptism of desire.

This point is made again by the Pope in the second half of the quotation, where he says that when those unbaptized persons “**ask for what in their faith is their only help, let them receive at the very moment of their request the reward of regeneration they beg for.**” This means that receiving water Baptism is the *only help to salvation* for such persons who earnestly desire to receive Baptism. There is no help to salvation for such persons in their desire or martyrdom, but only in receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex*

cathedra: “If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, **and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor**: let him be anathema.”

As you can see, you are anathematized if you assert that baptism of desire is a Catholic doctrine!

MAJOR OBJECTIONS

SESS. 6, CHAP. 4 OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

OBJECTION- In Session 6, Chapter 4 of its decree on Justification, the Council of Trent teaches that justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it! So there!

ANSWER- [Preliminary Note: If Sess. 6, Chap. 4 of Trent were teaching what the baptism of desire advocates claim (which it isn't), then it would mean that every man must receive baptism or at least have the actual desire/vow for baptism to be saved. It would mean that it would be **heresy** to say that any unbaptized person could be saved if he doesn't have at least the desire/vow for water baptism. But 99% of the people who quote this passage in favor of baptism of desire don't even believe that one must desire baptism to be saved! They believe that Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, etc. can be saved who don't desire water baptism. Thus, 99% of those who quote this passage **reject even what they claim it is teaching**. Frankly, this fact just shows the dishonesty and the bad will of most baptism of desire advocates in attempting to quote this passage as if they were devoted to its teaching when, in fact, they don't believe in it at all and are in heresy for teaching that non-Catholics can be saved who don't even desire water baptism.]

That being noted, this passage of the Council of Trent does not teach that Justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it. It says that justification in the impious **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** the water of baptism or the desire for it. This is totally different from the idea that justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it.

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Sess. 6, Chap. 4: “In these words there is suggested a description of the justification of the impious, how there is a transition from that state in which a person is born as a child of the first Adam to the state of grace and of adoption as sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ our savior; indeed, this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** the laver of regeneration or a desire for it, **AS IT IS WRITTEN: Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).**”

First off, the reader should note that this crucial passage from Trent has been horribly mistranslated in the popular English version of Denzinger, the Sources of Catholic Dogma, which is cited above.

The critical phrase, “*this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, cannot take place*”

without the laver of regeneration or a desire for it” has been mistranslated to read: “*this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, cannot take place except through the laver of regeneration or a desire for it...*” This mistranslation of the Latin word “*sine*” (without) – which is found in the original Latin – to “except through” completely alters the meaning of the passage to favor the error of baptism of desire. This is important to keep in mind because this mistranslation is still being used all the time by baptism of desire apologists (often deliberately), including in recent publications of the SSPX and CMRI. That being mentioned, I will proceed to discuss what the council actually says here.

Looking at a correct translation, which is found in many books, the reader also should notice that, in this passage, the Council of Trent teaches that John 3:5 is to be taken as it is written (Latin: *sicut scriptum est*), which excludes any possibility of salvation without being born again of water in the Sacrament of Baptism. There is no way that baptism of desire can be true if John 3:5 is to be taken as it is written, because John 3:5 says that every man must be born again of water and the Spirit to be saved, which is what the theory of baptism of desire denies. The theory of baptism of desire and an interpretation of John 3:5 as it is written are mutually exclusive (they cannot both be true at the same time) – and every baptism of desire proponent will admit this. That is why all of them must – and do – opt for a non-literal interpretation of John 3:5.

But what does the passage in Trent that we just discussed say: It says infallibly, “**AS IT IS WRITTEN, UNLESS A MAN IS BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE HOLY GHOST, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**”

But what about the claim of the baptism of desire people: that the use of the word “or” (Latin: *aut*) in the above passage means that justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it. A careful look at the correct translation of this passage shows this claim to be false. Suppose I said, “*This shower cannot take place without water or the desire to take one.*” Does this mean that a shower can take place by the desire to take a shower? No it doesn’t. It means that both (water and desire) are necessary.

Or suppose I said, “*There cannot be a wedding without a bride or a groom.*” Does this mean that you can have a wedding with a groom and not a bride? Of course not. It means that both are necessary for the wedding. One could give hundreds of other examples. Likewise, the passage above in Trent says that Justification **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** water or desire; in other words, both are necessary. It does not say that Justification *does take place* by either water or desire!

THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

OBJECTION- The Catechism of the Council of Trent taught that one’s determination to receive baptism could avail him to grace and righteousness if it is impossible for him to receive baptism.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, *Ordinarily They Are Not Baptized At Once*, p. 179: “On adults, however, the Church has not been accustomed to confer the Sacrament of Baptism at once, but has ordained that it be deferred for a certain time. The delay is not attended with the

same danger as in the case of infants, which we have already mentioned; should any unforeseen accident make it impossible for adults to be washed in the salutary waters, their intention and determination to receive Baptism and their repentance for past sins, will avail them to grace and righteousness.”

ANSWER- The Catechism of the Council of Trent is not infallible. Fathers John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P. wrote the introduction for a common English translation of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. Their introduction contains the following interesting quote from Dr. John Hagan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome, about the Catechism’s authority.

*Catechism of the Council of Trent- Fifteenth printing, TAN Books, Introduction XXXVI: “Official documents have occasionally been issued by Popes to explain certain points of Catholic teaching to individuals, or to local Christian communities; whereas the Roman Catechism comprises practically the whole body of Christian doctrine, and is addressed to the whole Church. **Its teaching is not infallible**; but it holds a place between approved catechisms and what is *de fide*.”*

THE CATECHISM ATTRIBUTED TO ST. PIUS X

The Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X repeats for us the same *de fide* teaching of the Catholic Church on the absolute necessity of water baptism for salvation.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Sacraments*, “Baptism,” Q. 16: “Q. Is Baptism necessary to salvation? A. **Baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation**, for Our Lord has expressly said: ‘*Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*’”

So, contrary to popular belief, those who reject “baptism of desire” actually follow the teaching of the Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X on the absolute necessity of water baptism. They don’t follow, however, the teaching of this *fallible* Catechism when it proceeds to contradict this truth on the absolute necessity of water baptism for salvation.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Sacraments*, “Baptism,” Q. 17: “Q. Can the absence of Baptism be supplied in any other way? A. **The absence of Baptism can be supplied** by martyrdom, which is called Baptism of Blood, or by an act of perfect love of God, or of contrition, along with the desire, at least implicit, of Baptism, and this is called Baptism of Desire.”

This again is a total contradiction to what is stated in Question 16. It should be noted that this catechism, while attributed to Pope St. Pius X, did not come from his pen and was not solemnly promulgated by him. There is no Papal Bull from him promulgating the catechism, so it is just a fallible catechism that went out during his reign and was given his name. But, even if St. Pius X had himself authored the above words (which he didn’t), it wouldn’t make a bit of difference to the points I’ve made. This is because a pope is only infallible when speaking magisterially. This catechism is not infallible because it wasn’t promulgated solemnly from the Chair of Peter or even specifically by the pope. Further, this catechism is

proven not to be infallible by the fact that it teaches the abominable heresy that there is salvation “outside” the Church (as I will show)!

But I will first quote where the catechism affirms the dogma.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Apostles' Creed*, “The Church in Particular,” Q. 27: “Q. Can one be saved outside the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church? A. **No, no one can be saved outside the Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church, just as no one could be saved from the flood outside the Ark of Noah, which was a figure of the Church.**”

Here the Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X reaffirms the defined dogma. But it proceeds to deny this dogma just two questions later!

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Apostles' Creed*, “The Church in Particular,” Q. 29: “Q. But if a man through no fault of his own is outside the Church, can he be saved? A. **If he is outside the Church through no fault of his, that is, if he is in good faith**, and if he has received Baptism, or at least has the implicit desire of Baptism; and if, moreover, he sincerely seeks the truth and does God’s will as best as he can, such a man is indeed separated from the body of the Church, but is united to the soul of the Church and consequently is on the way of salvation.”

Here we see this fallible Catechism word for word denying the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation! It teaches that there can be salvation “outside” the Church, which directly denies the truth it taught to the people in Question 27. This statement is so heretical, in fact, **that it would be repudiated even by most of the crafty heretics of our day, who know that they cannot say that people are saved “outside,” so they argue that non-Catholics are not “outside” but are “inside” somehow.** So even those crafty heretics who reject the true meaning of Outside the Church There is No Salvation would have to admit that the above statement is heretical!

Further, notice that the catechism attributed to St. Pius X teaches the heresy that persons can be united to the “Soul” of the Church, but not the Body. As proven already, the Catholic Church is a Mystical Body. Those who are not part of the Body are no part at all.

Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos* (# 10), Jan. 6, 1928: “For since the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: **whosoever therefore is not united with the body is no member of it, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.**”

This discussion on the catechisms should demonstrate to the reader how the rampant denial of Outside the Church There is No Salvation and the necessity of Water Baptism has been perpetuated through fallible texts with imprimaturs and why it has been imbibed today by almost all who profess to be Catholic. It has been perpetuated by fallible documents and texts which contradict themselves, which contradict defined dogma, and which teach heresy, and which – all the while – elsewhere affirm the immutable truths of the absolute necessity of the Catholic Church and water baptism for salvation. And this is why Catholics are bound to adhere to infallibly defined dogma, not fallible catechisms or theologians.

Pope Pius IX, *Singulari Quadem*: “For, in truth, when released from these corporeal chains, ‘we shall see God as He is’ (1 John 3:2), we shall understand perfectly by how close and beautiful a bond divine mercy and justice are united; but, as long as we are on earth, weighed down by this mortal mass which blunts the soul, **let us hold most firmly that, in accordance with Catholic teaching, there is ‘one God, one faith, one baptism’ [Eph. 4:5]; it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry.”**

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone says that baptism [the sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema.**”

How many infallible statements from Popes have we not seen, which absolutely proves that a real psychical water-baptism is necessary for salvation? Anyone denying this fact is simply a liar and a heretic who obstinately adhere to fallible sources instead of infallible ones, and imagines himself (or some other man, or some other fallible source) to be the source of truth, thus putting man in the place of God (the infallible Popes, through whom God's truth is revealed). When such a person above described prays the "Our Father" he is a hypocrite, because he himself has no intention of doing the will of God!

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR EVERYONE ABOVE THE AGE OF REASON TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRINITY AND THE INCARNATION TO BE SAVED

John 3:36- “He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

The Catholic Church also teaches that it is absolutely necessary for everyone above reason to positively know about the most holy mysteries of our great religion in order to be saved. These mysteries are the Trinity and the Incarnation. Those who speak about invincible ignorance and that ignorance about the Catholic faith can somehow save a person are thoroughly refuted by these words below. They are also refuted by Our Lord's words in the Gospel!

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*:

“Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.– But the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance; for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit, their glory is equal, their majesty coeternal...and in this Trinity there is nothing first or later, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal with one another, so that in every respect, as has already been said above, both unity in Trinity, and Trinity in unity must be worshipped. **Therefore let him who wishes to be saved, think thus concerning the Trinity.**

“But it is necessary for eternal salvation that he faithfully believe also in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Son of God is God and man... This is the Catholic faith; unless each one believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.”

Some will state that dogmas of the Catholic Church that true non heretical Popes have pronounced are somehow their own interpretation of how things work and that the Popes are not inspired by God when they speak infallibly from the chair of Peter. Such nonsense would mean that no foundation of truth could ever exist since there would be no infallible declarations by the Popes to rely on to explain Scripture to us. These woeful wretches are also condemned by our saintly Pope St. Pius X!

Pope St. Pius X, *Lamentabile*, The Errors of the Modernists, July 3, 1907, #22: **“The dogmas which the Church professes as revealed are not truths fallen from heaven, but they are a kind of interpretation of religious facts, which the human mind by a laborious effort prepared for itself.”- Condemned**

Dogmas are truths fallen from heaven which cannot possibly contain error. They are not merely human statements, written to warn non-Catholics, which are subject to correction and qualification. Dogmas are infallible definitions of the truth which can never be changed or corrected, and have no need to be changed or corrected since they cannot possibly contain error. Dogmas are defined so that Catholics must know what they must believe as true from divine revelation without any possibility of error.

Pope Leo XII, *Ubi Primum* (# 14), May 5, 1824: **“It is impossible for the most true God, who is Truth itself, the best, the wisest Provider, and the Rewarder of good men, to approve all sects who profess false teachings which are often inconsistent with one another and contradictory, and to confer eternal rewards on their members... by divine faith we hold one Lord, one faith, one baptism... This is why we profess that there is no salvation outside the Church.”**

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: “There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice.”

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, Nov. 18, 1302: “With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess **this Church outside of which there is no salvation nor remission of sin.**”

INVINCIBLE IGNORANCE

2 Corinthians 4:3: ***“And if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.”***

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Sess. 6 on Justification, Chap. 15: “...it must be maintained that the grace of justification, although received, is lost not only by infidelity, whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin, although faith be not lost, **thereby defending the doctrine of the divine law which excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelievers**, but also the faithful who are ‘fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars

with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners' [1 Cor. 6:9], and all others who commit deadly sins..."

The dogma Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation has been solemnly defined at least seven times by popes speaking from the Chair of St. Peter. Never once were any exceptions mentioned about "invincible ignorance." In fact, it is just the opposite: all exceptions were always excluded.

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: "There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice."

Thus, the idea that a non-Catholic who is ignorant of the Faith can be saved is heretical; it is contrary to the dogma that "**no one**," (Pope Pius IV; Benedict XIV; Pius IX) "**nobody at all**," (Innocent III) "**nobody**, even if he shed his blood in the name of Christ" (Eugene IV) can be saved as a non-Catholic. It is a denial of the dogma that "**every human creature**" (Boniface VIII) must be a Catholic, and that "**only those**" (Eugene IV) inside the bosom and unity of the Church can achieve salvation.

Those who insist that "invincible ignorance" can possibly save a person who dies as a non-Catholic simply depart from and deny the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church.

Fr. Francisco de Vitoria, O.P., a famous 16th century Dominican theologian, summed up the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church on this topic very well. Here is how he put it: "**When we postulate invincible ignorance on the subject of baptism or of the Christian faith, it does not follow that a person can be saved without baptism or the Christian faith.** For the aborigines to whom no preaching of the faith or Christian religion has come will be damned for mortal sins or for idolatry, but not for the sin of unbelief. As St. Thomas says, however, if they do what in them lies [in their power], accompanied by a good life according to the law of nature, it is consistent with God's providence that he will illuminate them regarding the name of Christ."

Fr. Michael Muller, C.S.S.R., *The Catholic Dogma*, pp. 217-218, 1888: "**Inculpable or invincible ignorance has never been and will never be a means of salvation.** To be saved, it is necessary to be justified, or to be in the state of grace. In order to obtain sanctifying grace, it is necessary to have the proper dispositions for justification; that is, true divine faith **in at least the necessary truths of salvation**, confident hope in the divine Savior, sincere sorrow for sin, together with the firm purpose of doing all that God has commanded, etc. **Now, these supernatural acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, etc., which prepare the soul for receiving sanctifying grace, can never be supplied by invincible ignorance; and if invincible ignorance cannot supply the preparation for receiving sanctifying grace, much less can it bestow sanctifying grace itself.** 'Invincible ignorance,' says St. Thomas, 'is a punishment for sin.' (De, Infid. Q. x., art. 1).

All the people who die in cultures which have never been penetrated by the Gospel go to Hell for sins against the natural law and the other grave sins which they commit – which bad will and failure to cooperate with God's grace is the reason He does not reveal the Gospel to them. The First Vatican Council defined infallibly, based on Romans 1, that the one true God

can be known with certitude by the things which have been made, and by the natural light of human reason.

St. Paul, *Romans 1:18-20*: “For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice: Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it to them. **For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable.**”

Everyone can know with certainty that there is a supreme spiritual being, Who is the One True God and the Creator of the world and all that it contains. Everyone knows that God is not something that they have carved out of wood or jade or stone. They know that God is not the tree that they worship or the river they worship or the rock or the snake or the sacred tree frog. They know that these things aren't the Creator of the universe. Every such person knows that he is worshipping a creature rather than the Creator. They are, as St. Paul says in verse 20, without excuse. St. Augustine explains this well in reference to persons who died ignorant of the Faith and without baptism.

St. Augustine (+428): “... **God foreknew that if they had lived and the gospel had been preached to them, they would have heard it without belief.**”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 14, A. 11, ad 1: Objection- “**It is possible that someone may be brought up in the forest, or among wolves; such a man cannot explicitly know anything about the faith.** St. Thomas replies- It is the characteristic of Divine Providence to provide every man with what is necessary for salvation... provided on his part there is no hindrance. In the case of a man who seeks good and shuns evil, by the leading of natural reason, **God would either reveal to him through internal inspiration what had to be believed, or would send some preacher of the faith to him...**”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. II*, 28, Q. 1, A. 4, ad 4: “If a man born among barbarian nations, does what he can, God Himself will show him what is necessary for salvation, either by inspiration or sending a teacher to him.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. III*, 25, Q. 2, A. 2, solute. 2: “**If a man should have no one to instruct him, God will show him**, unless he culpably wishes to remain where he is.”

In his Encyclical Letters, dated Dec. 8, 1849; Dec.. 8, 1864; and Aug. 10, 1863, and in his Allocution on Dec. 9, 1854: Pope Pius IX. says: "It is not without sorrow that we have learned another not less pernicious error, which has been spread in several parts of Catholic countries, and has been imbibed by many Catholics, who are of opinion that all those who are not at all members of the true Church of Christ, can be saved: Hence they often discuss the question concerning the future fate and condition of those who die without having professed the Catholic faith, and give the most frivolous reasons in support of their wicked opinion"

"We must mention and condemn again that most pernicious error, which has been imbibed by

certain Catholics, who are of the opinion that those people who live in error and have not the true faith, and are separated from Catholic unity, may obtain life everlasting. Now this opinion is most contrary to Catholic faith, as is evident from the plain words of our Lord, (Matt. xviii. 17 ; Mark xvi. 16; Luke x. 16; John iii. 18) as also from the words of St. Paul, (II. Tim. iii. 11) and of St. Peter (II. Peter. ii. 1). To entertain opinions contrary to this Catholic faith is to be an impious wretch."

"We therefore again reprobate, proscribe, and condemn all and every one of these perverse opinions and doctrines, and it is our absolute will and command that all sons of the Catholic Church shall hold them as reprobated, proscribed, and condemned. It belongs to our Apostolic office to rouse your Episcopal zeal and watchfulness to do all in your power to banish from the minds of the people such impious and pernicious opinions, which lead to indifference of religion, which we behold spreading more and more, to the ruin of souls. Oppose all your energy and zeal to these errors and employ zealous priests to impugn and annihilate them, and to impress very deeply upon the minds and hearts of the faithful the great dogma of our most holy religion, that salvation can be had only in the Catholic faith. Often exhort the clergy and the faithful to give thanks to God for the great gift of the Catholic faith."

St. Augustine, *Tractate 89*, on John 15:22-23- **"What, then, does He [Jesus] mean by the words, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin?* [John 15:22] Was it that the Jews were without sin before Christ came to them in the flesh? Who, though he were the greatest fool, would say so?... But when He went on to say, *But now they have no excuse for their sin*, some may be moved to inquire whether those to whom Christ neither came nor spoke, have an excuse for their sin. For if they have not, why is it said here that these had none, on the very ground that He did come and speak to them? And if they have, have they it to the extent of thereby being barred from punishment, or of receiving it in a milder degree? To these inquiries, with the Lord's help and to the best of my capacity, I reply, that such have an excuse, *not for every one of their sins, but for this sin of not believing on Christ*, inasmuch as He came not and spoke not to them."**

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio*, May 27, 1832, on no salvation outside the Church: **"Finally some of these misguided people attempt to persuade themselves and others that men are not saved only in the Catholic religion, but that even heretics may attain eternal life...** You know how zealously Our predecessors taught that article of faith which these dare to deny, namely the necessity of the Catholic faith and of unity for salvation... Omitting other appropriate passages *which are almost numberless in the writings of the Fathers*, We shall praise St. Gregory the Great who expressly testifies that THIS IS INDEED THE TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. He says: '*The holy universal Church teaches that it is not possible to worship God truly except in her and asserts that all who are outside of her will not be saved.*'

THE DOGMA, POPE PIUS IX AND INVINCIBLE IGNORANCE

OBJECTION- What about Pope Pius IX? Isn't it true that he taught that the invincibly ignorant could be saved in two documents? What about *Singulari Quadem* and *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*?

ANSWER- Confusion on this topic has increased as a result of a few misunderstood

statements from Pope Pius IX. As we analyze these statements, **it is imperative to keep in mind that, even if Pope Pius IX had taught that the invincibly ignorant could be saved on these two occasions, it wouldn't mean that such a position is true, because they were fallible documents which could have contained error.** No pope can change or contradict dogma. Pope Honorius, who reigned in the 7th century, was, in fact, later condemned for propagating heresy, though not in his solemn capacity teaching to the universal Church, further proving how even a pope can err or teach heresy in his fallible capacity. Thus, no one, not even a pope, can change the dogma that no one who dies outside the Catholic Church, ignorant or not, can be saved. Here are some more quotes on ignorance.

Pope Benedict XV, *Humani Generis Redemptionem* (# 14), June 15, 1917: “...‘**Ignorance is the mother of all errors,**’ as the Fourth Lateran Council so truthfully observes.”

The Errors of Peter Abelard, Condemned by Innocent II, July 16, 1140, #10: “That they have not sinned who being ignorant have crucified Christ, **and that whatever is done through ignorance must not be considered sin.**” - Condemned

The first of the documents from Pope Pius IX, frequently quoted by those who believe in salvation outside the Church, is *Singulari Quadem*, an allocution (a speech to the cardinals) given December 9, 1854:

“...*those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.*”

First of all, this is a speech of Pope Pius IX to the cardinals. It is not a dogmatic pronouncement, not even an encyclical, nor even an encyclical addressed to the entire Church.

But is Pope Pius IX saying that the invincibly ignorant can be justified and saved in their condition? No. Rather, he is stating that the “invincibly ignorant” will not be held accountable for the sin of infidelity, but they will still go to Hell. Read carefully the last part of the sentence, “are not subject to any guilt IN THIS MATTER,” that is, in the matter of infidelity. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that **unbelievers who have never heard of the Gospel are damned for their other sins**, which cannot be remitted without Faith, not because of the sin of infidelity (or disbelief in the Gospel). These other sins of the unbelievers serve as the reason why God does not reveal the Gospel to them and which ultimately excludes them from salvation. If one among them, however, were truly sincere and of good will, and cooperating with the natural law, then God would send a preacher (even miraculously, if necessary) to bring the Catholic Faith and baptism to him. Pope Pius IX goes on to say in the same allocution concerning a person of good will who is invincibly ignorant:

“*the gifts of heavenly grace will assuredly not be denied to those who sincerely want and pray for refreshment by the divine light...*”

St. Thomas Aquinas, Sent. III, 25, Q. 2, A. 2, solute. 2: “**If a man should have no one to instruct him, God will show him**, unless he culpably wishes to remain where he is.”

St. Augustine, *Tractate 89*, on John 15:22-23- “**What, then, does He [Jesus] mean by the**

words, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin?* [John 15:22] Was it that the Jews were without sin before Christ came to them in the flesh? Who, though he were the greatest fool, would say so?...To these inquiries, with the Lord's help and to the best of my capacity, I reply, that such have an excuse, *not for every one of their sins, but for this sin of not believing on Christ*, inasmuch as He came not and spoke not to them."

Thus, Pope Pius IX was not teaching that people who are ignorant of the Catholic Faith can be saved; he was, rather, stating that such unbelievers are not damned for the matter of infidelity. The fact that all who die as ignorant non-Catholics are not saved is the affirmation of all of Catholic Tradition and all the saints, besides being the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius IX proceeded to speak about the invincibly ignorant again seven years later in his encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, August 10, 1863. *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* does not meet the requirements for infallibility; it is addressed only to the cardinals and bishops of Italy.

Pope Pius IX, *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*: "*And here, beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, **We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life.** Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. It is known to us and to you that they who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion AND WHO ZEALOUSLY KEEPING THE NATURAL LAW AND ITS PRECEPTS ENGRAVED IN THE HEARTS OF ALL BY GOD, AND BEING READY TO OBEY GOD, LIVE AN HONEST AND UPRIGHT LIFE, can, by the OPERATING POWER OF DIVINE LIGHT AND GRACE, attain eternal life since God...will by no means suffer anyone to be punished with eternal torment who has not the guilt of deliberate sin.*"

First, notice that Pope Pius IX specifically condemns the idea that a man "living in error and separated from the true Faith" can be saved. What, may I ask, is the idea of salvation for the "invincibly ignorant"? Why, of course, it is the idea that a man living in error and separated from the true Faith can be saved. So, the very concept of salvation for the "invincibly ignorant" is condemned as QUITE CONTRARY TO CATHOLIC TEACHING in this very document of Pope Pius IX.

Second, notice again that Pope Pius IX does not say anywhere that the invincibly ignorant can be saved where they are. Rather, he is reiterating that the ignorant, if they cooperate with God's grace, keep the natural law and respond to God's call, they can by God's "*operating power of divine light and grace*" [*being enlightened by the truth of the Gospel*] attain eternal life, since God will certainly bring all of his elect to the knowledge of the truth and into the Church by baptism. **According to the specific definition of Sacred Scripture, "divine light" is the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ** (the Catholic Faith) which removes the ignorant from darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 "For **you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord**. Walk then as children of the light."

1 Thess. 5:4-5 “But you, **brethren [believers]**, are not in darkness... For all **you are the children of the light**.”

So, we must not interpret Pius IX’s words in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* about the good-willed ignorant being saved by receiving “divine light and grace” contrary to their clear scriptural and Traditional meaning, which is that divine light and grace is received by hearing of the Gospel, believing it and being baptized. Thus, in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, Pius IX is saying that the good-willed, sincere person who is ignorant of the Faith will be “illuminated” by receiving the “divine light” (hearing the Gospel) and will enter the Catholic Church so that he can be saved.

I realize that Pope Pius IX was not nearly as clear as he could have been in the second half of *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*. The heretics have had a field day with it, because they think that they can exploit its wording to favor their heresy that there is salvation outside the Church. If Pope Pius IX had repeated in a strong way the previous definitions of the popes, without any ambiguous language, he would have avoided the danger of modernists *misinterpreting* his words. This is a shame because almost all of his statements on this topic do very clearly affirm Church dogma without any ambiguity that heretics can jump on.

Pope Pius IX, *Nostis et Nobiscum* (# 10), Dec. 8, 1849: “In particular, **ensure that the faithful are deeply and thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrine that the Catholic faith is necessary for attaining salvation**. (This doctrine, received from Christ and emphasized by the Fathers and Councils, is also contained in the formulae of the profession of faith used by Latin, Greek and Oriental Catholics).”

Pope Pius IX, *Ubi primum* (# 10), June 17, 1847: “**For ‘there is one universal Church outside of which no one at all is saved**; it contains regular and secular prelates along with those under their jurisdiction, **who all profess one Lord, one faith and one baptism.**”

Pope Pius IX- *Syllabus of Modern Errors*- Proposition 16, Dec. 8, 1854: “Man may, in the observance of any religion whatever, find the way of eternal salvation, and arrive at eternal salvation.” – **Condemned**

Notice again that the concept of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant” is condemned here. The concept of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant,” as it is held by almost everyone who holds it today, is that some men – including those who observe non-Catholic religions – can find and arrive at salvation in these religions because they are “without fault of their own.” But this is heretical and condemned by Pius IX’s own *Syllabus of Errors* above.

SALVATION FOR THE “INVINCIBLY IGNORANT” REDUCED TO ITS ABSURD PRINCIPLE

Invincible ignorance becomes a destructive heresy, obliterating the necessity of the catholic faith all over the world. The theory that “invincible ignorance” saves can also be refuted by reducing it to its absurd principle, which is this: If being ignorant of the Savior could render one worthy of salvation, then Catholics are actually doing non-Christians a disservice in

preaching Jesus Christ to them. St. Paul, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Pierre De Smet, the North American Martyrs and the other countless heroic missionaries in Church history, who suffered mind-boggling hardships to preach the Gospel to the ignorant pagans, *were simply making these people more culpable and more guilty before God*, according to the modern heresy of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant.” If the missionaries had just stayed home, according to the invincible ignorance heresy, the sincere pagans could have been saved for never having heard of Christ through *no fault of their own*. But by making the effort to preach Christ to them, as the missionaries did, they were – according to the invincible ignorance heresy – rendering these persons *without excuse* if they failed to live up to the obligations of the Gospel or rejected it altogether. Thus, preaching the Gospel to the non-Christians, according to the heretical “invincible ignorance” theory, puts the pagans in a situation in which it is more likely that they are going to be damned. Thus, the modern heresy of salvation by being “invincibly ignorant” actually makes preaching to the pagans *counterproductive* for the salvation of souls. But such a notion is absurd, of course, and proves the illogical and false nature of the invincible ignorance heresy.

But, in fact, the heresy has gotten so bad today in the time of the Great Apostasy in which we live that most “Catholics” today readily profess that pagans, Jews, Buddhists, etc. who know of the Gospel *and reject it* can also be saved by “invincible ignorance.” But this is only the necessary result of the invincible ignorance heresy; for if pagans who’ve never heard of Christ can be saved “in good faith,” then pagans who reject Christ could also be in good faith too, for how much does one have to hear to lose his “invincible ignorance”? Once one strays from the principle – that is to say, once one rejects the divinely revealed truth – that *all who die as pagans are definitely lost without exception* (Pope Eugene IV, *de fide*), the clear cut lines of demarcation are rejected, and a gray area necessarily takes over, a gray area according to which *one cannot possibly know or set limits on who is possibly in good faith and who is not*.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* (# 13), Aug. 15, 1832: “With the admonition of the apostle that ‘there is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5) **may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever.** They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that ‘those who are not with Christ are against Him,’ (Lk. 11:23) and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. **Therefore, ‘without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate’ (Athanasian Creed).**

THE KEYS OF ST. PETER AND HIS UNFAILING FAITH

It is a fact of history, scripture and tradition that Our Lord Jesus Christ founded His universal Church (the Catholic Church) upon St. Peter.

Matthew 16:18-19-“And I say to thee: **That thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.** And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”

Our Lord made St. Peter the first pope, entrusted to him His entire flock, and gave him supreme authority in the universal Church of Christ.

John 21:15-17-“**Jesus saith to Simon Peter:** Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs.** He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs.** He saith to him a third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. **He said to him: Feed my sheep.**”

And with the supreme authority that Our Lord Jesus Christ conferred upon St. Peter (and his successors, the popes) comes what is called Papal Infallibility. Papal Infallibility is inseparable from Papal Supremacy – there was no point for Christ to make St. Peter the head of His Church (as Christ clearly did) if St. Peter or his successors, the popes, could err when exercising that supreme authority to teach on a point of Faith. The supreme authority must be unfailing on binding matters of Faith and morals or else it is no true authority from Christ at all.

Papal Infallibility does not mean that a pope cannot err at all and it does not mean that a pope cannot lose his soul and be damned in Hell for grave sin. It means that the successors of St. Peter (the popes of the Catholic Church) cannot err when authoritatively teaching on a point of Faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ. We find the promise of the unfailing faith for St. Peter and his successors referred to by Christ in Luke 22.

Luke 22:31-32- “And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have all of you, that he may sift you as wheat: **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:** and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”

Satan desired to sift all the Apostles (plural) like wheat, but Jesus prayed for Simon Peter (singular), that his faith fail not. Jesus is saying that St. Peter and his successors (the popes of the Catholic Church) have an unfailing faith when authoritatively teaching a point of faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ.

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, *ex cathedra*:

“SO, THIS GIFT OF TRUTH AND A NEVER FAILING FAITH WAS DIVINELY CONFERRED UPON PETER AND HIS SUCCESSORS IN THIS CHAIR...”

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, *ex cathedra*:

“... the See of St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of His disciples: ‘I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not ...’”

And this truth has been held since the earliest times in the Catholic Church.

Pope St. Gelasius I, epistle 42, or Decretal *de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris*, 495:

“Accordingly, **the see of Peter** the Apostle of the Church of Rome is first, **having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor anything of this kind** (Eph. 5:27).”

The word “infallible” actually means “cannot fail” or “unfailing.” Therefore, the very term *Papal Infallibility* comes directly from Christ’s promise to St. Peter (and his successors) in Luke 22, that Peter has an unfailing Faith. Though this truth was believed since the beginning of the Church, it was specifically defined as a dogma at the First Vatican Council in 1870.

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, Session 4, Chap. 4:

“...the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* [from the Chair of Peter], that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church... **operates with that infallibility** with which the divine Redeemer wished that His Church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; **and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.**”

But how does one know when a pope is exercising his unfailing Faith to infallibly teach from the Chair of St. Peter? The answer is that we know from the language that the pope uses or the manner in which the pope teaches. Vatican I defined two requirements which must be fulfilled: 1) when the pope is carrying out his duty as pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority; 2) when he explains a doctrine on faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ. A pope can fulfill both of these requirements in just one line, by anathematizing a false opinion (such as many dogmatic councils) or by saying “By our apostolic authority we declare...” or by saying “We believe, profess, and teach” or by using words of similar importance and meaning, which indicate that the pope is teaching the whole Church on Faith in a definitive and binding fashion.

So, when a pope teaches from the Chair of Peter in the manner stipulated above he cannot be wrong. If he could be wrong, then the Church of Christ could be officially led into error, and Christ’s promise to St. Peter and His Church would fail (which is impossible). That which is taught from the Chair of Peter by the popes of the Catholic Church is the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. To reject that which is taught by the popes from the Chair of Peter is simply to despise Jesus Christ Himself.

Luke 10:16- “He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you despiseth me...”

Matthew 18:17 -“And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.”

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*, 1896:

“... Christ instituted a living, authoritative and permanent Magisterium... **If it could in any way be false, an evident contradiction follows; for then God Himself would be the author of error in man.**”

Most of the information contained in the Catholic Dogma / Doctrine section have been taken from the book “Outside the Catholic Church There is Absolutely No Salvation”, by Bro. Peter Dimond & Bro. Michael Dimond, O.S.B, which we encourage everyone to read. We have only taken a small portion from their voluminous 300+ pages book. So if you want to learn

more about Catholic dogma, and all kinds of objections heretics try to bring forth regarding the baptism and salvation issue, read their entire book which goes into much detail and history regarding these issues.

[http://www.mostholymfamilymonastery.com/
the_catholic_church_salvation_faith_and_baptism.php](http://www.mostholymfamilymonastery.com/the_catholic_church_salvation_faith_and_baptism.php)

GIFTS, DONATIONS AND WILLS

Catholics should neither will things nor give gifts/donations to those who are heretics or non-Catholics. This would include those who profess to be traditional Catholics, but don't hold the correct positions. Well, here are some interesting canons we've recently come across in study. They come from the regional councils in Africa around the year 419 A.D. They inculcate the same ancient Christian concept:

Canons of the African Code, 419 A.D., Canon 22: "And that to those who are not Catholic Christians, even if they be blood relations, **neither bishops nor clergymen shall give anything at all by way of donation of their possessions.**"

Canons of the African Code, 419 A.D., Canon 81: "It was ordained that **if any bishop should prefer to his Church strangers to blood relationship with him, or his heretical relatives, or pagans as his heirs**, he shall be anathematized even after his death..."

CHASTITY, HUMILITY, OBEDIENCE, AND LOVE

The word of God proclaims that all who wants to obtain Salvation must strive to live in Chastity, Humility, Obedience, and Love of God, in the true Catholic Faith, by renouncing all kinds of heresies and heretics.

Pope Pius IV, *Council of Trent*, Sess 14, Nov. 11, 1563, on Matrimony: "**If anyone says that the married state is to be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and happier to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be united in matrimony (Matt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:25): let him be anathema.**" (Denzinger 980)

St. John Chrysostom, A.D. 392: "**That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess.** And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as Heaven is better than Earth, as much better as angels are better than men." (*The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116)

You should fast often with moderation and abstain from eating superfluous food and drink in order to crucify your fleshly lusts and desires. Fasting is in truth one of the greatest ways to be victorious against fleshly lusts and desires along with the Rosary and spiritual reading.

Let every man understand that whenever he sins or speaks ungodly words and blasphemy, he murders himself and gives scandal to his brothers and sisters who beholds this behaviour in a spiritual way. To give others occasion of sin is the worst of all sins! Remember this and you

will always fear the Lord and remain in humility! No one should think himself better than his neighbour; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God! It is of great importance not to attend any kind of dance, ball, discotheque or the pub. Your eternal soul depends on it.

Be sure to not associate with worldly and ungodly people who refuse to obey the will of God, for they will tempt you with their sinful and ungodly life, and you will not escape punishment for being a friend with an unrepentant sinner, unless for the express purpose of his conversion. As all saints exclaim: most people that go to hell, go there because they sought human approval and friendship rather than friendship with God!

There will be no friendships in hell. In hell everyone will hate one another, and the more a person knew another, the more will that person hate the other, since that person was the greater cause of his eternal damnation. If this is so with friends, what then, will it be in regards to your own family? Accursed be you my wife, who led me to these sins of lust! Accursed be you my children, who after following my bad examples, fell headlong down to hell to my greater sorrow! Accursed by you my father and mother, for giving me bad advice, and accursed be me, wretched and sad, forever more in this lake of eternal fire!

In hell there will be perfect hatred for one another. One would rather be alone in hell if the option was given him, but this will not be. You will torment each other to the utmost in hell for all eternity, since you led each other down to this place of torments by your bad living and examples. How much a person will hate another in hell is indeed impossible for us still living to understand, but that the the hatred will be perfect, infinite and eternal, is easy to grasp!

"Most people fail to see that the sin of the Angels was a thought of revolt, and as a result a third part of those glorious spirits lost their thrones in Heaven. It was the eating of a little fruit by our First Mother, Eve, that proved the undoing of the human race. Was it not an act of disobedience that deprived Saul of his throne, and was it not a sinful glance that led holy David to the commission of a heinous crime? An act of vanity too, lost him 70,000 of his subjects. Did not the venerable Eleazar sacrifice his life rather than eat swine's flesh? And what about the death of Oza and Ahio for daring to touch the Ark? You fail to see that it is not the trifling act which is wrong, but the principle involved: the malice of the offence against an infinite God, to whom we owe our love, our gratitude and our allegiance. Surely, if God died on account of sin, sin must be dreadful. If sin is punished by Hell-fire, sin must be enormous. When you make light of sin, you judge not Catholics, but God Himself."

Sadly, only death and hell will serve to wake up the majority of the people reading this! You will read this and then continue in your sloth and worldliness, or you will have a short lived spiritual fervor that will cool as times goes by! The greatest error among those people that are condemned to hell are that they presume that they are in the state of grace and fit for heaven, thus showing of their pride and arrogance in that they do not even consider themselves as great sinners, who really do nothing at all to better themselves and their bad living, and who do not even consider their unworthiness of heaven, and the possibility of them actually being on the road to destruction. God condemns such presumption. We are sinful creatures who are able to fall into sin at every moment of our life. We must always trust in God and his mercy, not on our own strength. A person who is really humble will never think of himself that he is already saved while still living on earth. He will have death before his eyes and the constant thought of the possibility of losing God through sin. These and like thoughts will make him constant in the prayers to God for help to achieve salvation, and the grace to avoid sin. A

person who does not pray to God for help to achieve salvation is already condemned and will not make it!

INFORMATION ABOUT US AND OUR MISSION

God Bless You!

We are three unworthy servants of our God and Lord Jesus Christ who, by the grace of God, live like monks, in chastity and humility and in dedicating our lives to love God above all, while spreading Jesus' words all over the world. Our mission is to gather brothers and sisters who have the good will to preach, teach and spread these Holy Revelations to our beloved brothers and sisters in the world. Please put a link to our homepage and tell all your friends, relatives and everyone you know about this site and the wonderful words of our Lord for the salvation of souls. If you are a preacher, we hope and pray that you will preach these words from the Holy Spirit to your whole congregation.

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

This verse clearly teaches that in order to be saved you need to save yourself and others from hell. It also clearly teaches that if you are not trying to save souls, you are, in fact, damaging and scattering souls. And Christ says that those who do not try to save souls are his enemies. So, are you really doing all you can?

We humbly ask you all to print out copies of these books with a link to our homepage and give them free of charge to all your brothers and sisters. Go to the churches and hand them out or place them on vehicles parked for church services. We also suggest that you ask your congregation leader if he is willing to buy The Prophecies and Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden for his whole congregation at a discounted bulk rate. We also ask you to place copies of these great revelations everywhere: on doors, trees and other places where they can be seen by all in order to save as many souls as possible for our Lord Jesus Christ!

We are looking for willing translators who have the skill to make a good translation into different languages. We are also looking for someone who can make an audio book in mp3. We wish to have at least 50 translated languages, one day, with the help of you, the reader. Please help us find more books of Saint Bridget's Revelations in other languages. You will be rewarded greatly by our Lord Jesus Christ if you make an effort to spread His divine words to others in any way you can. You can help to spread the word of God in many ways: for example, by writing about our website and quoting the Revelations of St. Bridget or the things said in our videos with our link or our hyperlink added to the text on forums and blogs and the like so that people can find the wonderful words by Our Lord and His Mother and our videos. You can upload our videos to different video sites, embed them on your own site or on forum sites and the like, and share them with your friends and even your enemies so that they may grow in the true faith or come to the true faith. You can also contact book salesmen and book publishers in order to ask them to buy these books from us or print these books for us. Please give out and share our books and DVD's free of charge and send e-mails to people about our site. We also beg you to pray the Rosary for their sake and plead with them to also begin to pray the Rosary. For a hardened heart will become soft by continuing praying the Rosary. No prayer is as powerful as the Holy Rosary! If you are able and willing to help us with the

salvation of souls, please contact us and we will give you further instructions. For by helping other people's souls, you help yourself!

Saint Bridget was canonized by Pope Boniface IX in the year 1391 and confirmed by Pope Martin V in the Council of Constance in the year 1415.

The Revelations of St. Bridget were accorded an exceptionally high degree of authenticity, authority and importance from an early date. Pope Gregory XI (1370-78) approved and confirmed them and judged them highly favorably, as did Boniface IX (1389-1404) in the papal Bull *Ab origine mundi*, par. 39 (7 Oct 1391). They were later examined at the Council of Constance (1414-18) and at the Council of Basel (1431-49), both judging them to be in conformity with the Catholic faith; The Revelations were also strongly defended by numerous highly regarded theologians, including Jean Gerson (1363-1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris and Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468).

Saint Bridget was born of a noble and rich family. Her family was good in their faith according to our Lord Jesus Christ and they gave a lot of their riches to the uprising of churches and monasteries and also a lot to the poor. Once, at the age of ten, she saw the Lord crucified, and the Lord Jesus Christ said: "Look, how I suffer!" She thought it had happened at the same time and answered: "O Lord, who has done this to you?" The Lord answered: "Those, who despise me and forget my great love." When her husband died she became a nun and gave away all of her riches. All of her prophecies have been fulfilled to this day and there are still a few left that shall be fulfilled.

Please do not forget to read these revelations of St. Bridget and other scriptures of God everyday to grow in spirit and virtue, because the devil will be doing everything in his power to make you stop reading God's word so that you will forget them and fall into sin. Do not forget to print out copies of these great revelations so that you always have them in your hand for when the great disasters which the Holy Bible warns about come to pass, and so that you don't rely (for example) on electricity that will not always be available.

This book is a mirror in which the soul can see its stains and learn what is pleasing to God and what displeases him. Read this book again and again and you will learn how you must love God and your neighbor, despise what is earthly and transient, striving after the everlasting and heavenly, enduring for Christ's sake the adversities of this world and despising its prosperity and enticements, thanking God in sickness, not taking pride in good health, not becoming presumptuous in good fortune nor downcast in trials.

St. Louis De Montfort (+1710): "Blessed Alan de la Roche who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the 'Hail Mary' (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world – Luke 1:28) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment."

We highly recommend that all 15 decades of the Rosary be prayed daily. Our Lady repeatedly emphasized the importance of praying the Rosary each day in her messages at Fatima. She even said that Francisco would have to pray 'many rosaries' before he could go to Heaven.

You should prioritize reading the word of God and praying before other activities to grow in the spirit. Praying all 15 decades of the Rosary each day can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, for many it is best accomplished by praying a part of the Rosary at different times of the day, for example, the joyful mysteries in the morning, sorrowful mysteries at midday, and glorious mysteries in the evening. 'Salve Regina' only needs to be prayed at the end of the entire day's rosary. An essential part of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries, episodes in the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. This means thinking about them, visualizing them, considering the graces and merits displayed in them, and using them for inspiration to better know and love God. It is also common to focus on a particular virtue with each mystery.

Quote taken from:

http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com/the_holy_rosary_and_the_blessed_virgin_mary.php

Our Lady to St. Dominic (1214): "Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world? 'Oh, my Lady,' answered St. Dominic, 'you know far better than I do...' Then Our Lady replied: 'I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the battering ram has always been the Angelic Psalter (the Rosary) which is the foundation stone of the New Testament. Therefore if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter (the Rosary).'" (The Secret of the Rosary, p. 18.)

"Ever since Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established this devotion, the voice of the people, which is the voice of God, called it "The Rosary". The word Rosary means "Crown of Roses," that is to say that every time people say the Rosary devoutly they place a crown of one hundred and fifty-three red roses and sixteen white roses upon the heads of Jesus and Mary. Being heavenly flowers, these roses will never fade or lose their exquisite beauty. In truth, they will stand before you for all eternity and bring you happiness and delight! Our Lady has shown her thorough approval of the name Rosary; she had revealed to several people that each time they say a Hail Mary they are giving her a beautiful rose and that each complete Rosary makes her a crown of roses.

The well-known Jesuit, Brother Alphonsus Rodriguez, used to say his Rosary with such fervor that he often saw a red rose come out of his mouth at each Our Father and a white rose at each Hail Mary. The red and white roses were equal in beauty and fragrance, the only difference being in their color.

The chronicles of Saint Francis tell of a young friar who had the praiseworthy habit of saying the Crown of Our Lady (the Rosary) every day before dinner. One day for some reason or other he did not manage to say it. The refectory bell had already been rung when he asked the Superior to allow him to say it before coming to the table, and having obtained the permission he withdrew to his cell to pray.

After he had been gone a long time the Superior sent another Friar to fetch him, and he found him in his room bathed in a heavenly light facing Our Lady who had two angels with her. Beautiful roses kept issuing from his mouth at each Hail Mary; the angels took them one by one, placing them on Our Lady's head, and she smilingly accepted them.

Finally two other friars who had been sent to find out what happened to the first two saw the

same lovely scene, and Our Lady did not go away until the whole Rosary had been said.”
(The Secret of the Rosary by St. Louis De Montfort)

“Show me a new road to our Lord, pave it with all the merits of the saints, adorn it with their heroic virtues, illuminate and enhance it with the splendour and beauty of the angels, have all the angels and saints there to guide and protect those who wish to follow it. Give me such a road and truly, truly, I boldly say—and I am telling the truth—that instead of this road, perfect though it be, I would still choose the immaculate way of Mary. It is a way, a road without stain or spot, without original sin or actual sin, without shadow or darkness”.
(True devotion to Mary by St. Louis De Montfort)

We also recommend you read the Word of God at least one to two hours every day until the moment of your death if it is possible. If you do not read enough everyday, your prayer will become empty since an ignorant person does not know what to ask and pray for in virtues and spiritual blessings. If you are unable to accomplish this right away, you should slowly but surely take steps to move to this point by making a resolution in your heart to never read or pray less than you have decided. Then when you have grown accustomed to maybe one hour reading and one hour praying per day, you can slowly try to add to this until you have reached your goal. It is much wiser to do it in this way and the goal will be reached much easier. For spiritual exercises are like most activities of the world: the more practice you have, the better you get. The best time for prayer is in the morning, since the mind is more clear from the thoughts and discussions of the world, so we advise you to always dedicate time in the morning for the Rosary. The Rosary is the most powerful weapon in existence against the devil and those who neglect it will indeed be eternally sorry for refusing to honor our Lady as she deserves! Think and reflect upon what greatness it is to be able to speak with the God of the whole creation and His Mother whenever we want. It is almost impossible for a man to be able to speak with a king or queen of this world, and yet the King of kings and his beloved Mother hear your every word. In truth, I tell you, that even one good word of prayer has more worth than all gold and jewels and an infinite amount of universes, for they will all perish, but God’s words will never perish. Think about how much you would concentrate and fight against distracting thoughts if someone were to tell you that you could have 10,000 dollars or a new car if you prayed a Rosary with full concentration and without yielding to distracting thoughts. This example should shame us all since we humans are, by our very nature, wicked at heart and are inclined to search for filth rather than gold (worldly things rather than heavenly ones). Everyone should try to remember this example, and then we will all be able to pray better which will bring us an everlasting, heavenly reward! The devils concentrate exceedingly much on getting a person to despise prayer in these ways: either they try to make you bored by it, or to have a difficulty in concentrating when praying, or to pray a little; for they know that prayer is the only way to salvation. The devices the devils use to distract you and lead you to hell in this age is are obviously worldly and ungodly media and video games and the like, but sins like the lust of the flesh, vanity, immodest clothing, gluttony, greed and pride among others also give them more power over the mind since the person searches for earthly comforts instead of heavenly ones.

St. Alphonsus (1760): “To a spiritual life the reading of holy books is perhaps not less useful than mental prayer. St. Bernard says reading instructs us at once in prayer, and in the practice of virtue. Hence he concluded that spiritual reading and prayer are the arms by which hell is conquered and paradise won... Hence St. Athanasius used to say that we find no one devoted

to the service of the Lord that did not practice spiritual reading.” (T.S., p. 513)

'Wherefore, children, let us hold fast our discipline, and let us not be careless. For in it the Lord is our fellow-worker, as it is written, "to all that choose the good, God worketh with them for good." But to avoid being heedless, it is good to consider the word of the Apostle, "I die daily." For if we too live as though dying daily, we shall not sin. And the meaning of that saying is, that as we rise day by day we should think that we shall not abide till evening; and again, when about to lie down to sleep, we should think that we shall not rise up. For our life is naturally uncertain, and Providence allots it to us daily. But thus ordering our daily life, we shall neither fall into sin, nor have a lust for anything, nor cherish wrath against any, nor shall we heap up treasure upon earth. But, as though under the daily expectation of death, we shall be without wealth, and shall forgive all things to all men, nor shall we retain at all the desire of women or of any other foul pleasure. But we shall turn from it as past and gone, ever striving and looking forward to the day of Judgment. For the greater dread and danger of torment ever destroys the ease of pleasure, and sets up the soul if it is like to fall. 'Wherefore having already begun and set out in the way of virtue, let us strive the more that we may attain those things that are before. And let no one turn to the things behind, like Lot's wife, all the more so that the Lord hath said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and turning back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven. (St. Athanasius, *The Life of Anthony*)

Catholics must also understand that few are saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the road to Heaven is straight and narrow and few find it, while the road to Hell is wide and taken by most (Mt. 7:13).

Matthew 7:13- "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!"

Luke 13:24- "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able."

Scripture also teaches that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the "prince" (John 12:31) and "god" (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world.

1 John 5:19- "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness."

It's the sad fact of history that most people in the world are of bad will and don't want the truth. That's why almost the whole world lies in darkness and on the road to perdition. This has been the case since the beginning. It was the case when only eight souls out of the world's entire population (Noah and his family) escaped God's wrath in the deluge that covered the entire earth, and when the Israelites rejected God's law and fell into idolatry over and over again. Only two men out of the whole population of Israelites (Joshua and Caleb) made it into the Promised Land since the people opposed God time upon time even though they had seen such miracles as the world had never seen!

Saint Leonard of Port Maurice [A.D. 1676-1751], on the fewness of the saved: "After consulting all the theologians and making a diligent study of the matter, he [Suarez] wrote, 'The most common sentiment which is held is that, among Catholics, there are more damned

souls than predestined souls.' Add the authority of the Greek and Latin Fathers to that of the theologians, and you will find that almost all of them say the same thing. This is the sentiment of Saint Theodore, Saint Basil, Saint Ephrem, Saint John Chrysostom. What is more, according to Baronius it was a common opinion among the Greek Fathers that this truth was expressly revealed to Saint Simeon Stylites and that after this revelation, it was to secure his salvation that he decided to live standing on top of a pillar for forty years, exposed to the weather, a model of penance and holiness for everyone. Now let us consult the Latin Fathers. You will hear Saint Gregory saying clearly, "Many attain to faith, but few to the heavenly kingdom." Saint Anselm declares, "There are few who are saved." Saint Augustine states even more clearly, "Therefore, few are saved in comparison to those who are damned." The most terrifying, however, is Saint Jerome. At the end of his life, in the presence of his disciples, he spoke these dreadful words: "Out of one hundred thousand people whose lives have always been bad, you will find barely one who is worthy of indulgence."

Vision of Archdeacon of Lyons, who died the same day as St. Bernard (1153): "Know, Monsignor, that at the very hour I passed away, thirty-three thousand people also died. Out of this number, Bernard and myself went up to heaven without delay, three went to purgatory, and all the others fell into Hell." (Told to St. Vincent Ferrer)

Think about how almost the whole of Europe was fully Catholic and how the kingdoms outlawed false religions at this time, making this moment of time much more spiritually beneficial for souls than we see today! If so few were saved at this moment of time, how many are saved now? One can only shudder and cry at this thought!

Christ speaking about all the monks of the world and the fewness of them being saved from hell: "They are in truth slaves, and there are very few who are different, yea so few that you hardly can find one in a hundred!" (The Prophecies and Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 6 - Chapter 35)

If Christ says that not even one in a hundred monks will be saved, how many do you think will be saved of normal people who do not even try to renounce the world and its pleasures! Sadly, only death and hell will serve to wake up the majority of the people reading this! You will read this and then continue in your sloth and worldliness, or you will have a short lived spiritual fervor that will cool as times goes by! We pray with tears that you are not one of these Judases that will suffer for all eternity in hell!

"Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause." (The Prophecies and Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4 - Chapter 7)

"Nicholas of Nice, speaking of the fire of Hell, says that nothing on earth could give an idea of it. He adds that if all the trees of the forests were cut down, piled into a vast heap and set on fire, this terrible pile would not be a spark of Hell."

"For the smallest sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent." (The Prophecies & Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 1 - Chapter 32)

“Other Christians accepted Hell on faith, because Christ had said repeatedly and with solemn emphasis that there is a Hell, but Jacinta had seen it; and once she grasped the idea that God’s justice is the counterpart of His mercy, and that there must be a Hell if there is to be a Heaven, nothing seemed so important to her except to save as many souls as possible from the horrors she had glimpsed under the radiant hands of the Queen of heaven. Nothing could be too hard, nothing too small or too great to give up.” (Our Lady of Fatima, p. 89)

Below is an interesting quote from St. Alphonsus concerning the idea of conversion to the Catholic Faith at the end of one’s life. Although these types of conversions are possible, they are extremely rare. St. Alphonsus states that these types of conversions proceed out of necessity, and that it would be very difficult for God to pardon such a person:

He that lives in sin till death shall die in sin. “You shall die in your sin.” (John 8:21.) It is true that, in whatsoever hour the sinner is converted, God promises to pardon him; but to no sinner has God promised the grace of conversion at the hour of death. “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” (Isaiah 55:6.) Then, there is for some sinners a time when they shall seek God and shall not find him. “You shall seek me, and shall not find me.” (John 7:34.) The unhappy beings will go to confession at the hour of death; they will promise and weep, and ask mercy of God, but without knowing what they do. A man who sees himself under the feet of a foe pointing a dagger to his throat, will shed tears, ask pardon, and promise to serve his enemy as a slave during the remainder of his life. But, will the enemy believe him? No; he will feel convinced that his words are not sincere—that his object is to escape from his hands, and that, should he be pardoned, he will become more hostile than ever. In like manner, how can God pardon the dying sinner, when he sees that all his acts of sorrow, and all his promises, proceed not from the heart, but from a dread of death and of approaching damnation.” (Sermon 38: On the death of the sinner, par. 8)

Many people today do not care about helping other souls. They waste their time watching worldly tv, series, movies, playing video games and only searching for earthly pleasures rather than saving their own and other people’s souls. They do not spend even an hour a day on trying to save their own selves and others from the eternal hellfire. These heartless sinners will not enter into heaven for they did not really care about other people’s souls but only about what their next pleasure or enjoyment would be. (Mt. 12:30) Our Lord will surely cast them into an eternal hell fire for their lack of charity!

Imagine seeing your friend or family member being mercilessly tortured and you not being able to prevent this. Most people would do almost anything to prevent this situation from happening. Yet, this is exactly what will happen unless you make an effort to save your friend. (Mt. 7:13-14) So, if you really care about your family and friends, please tell them about the Word of God and the great Revelations of St. Bridget. A single soul has more worth than an infinite amount of universes, for the material universe will cease to exist, but your friend's soul will never cease to exist. Always remember: A true friend is the one who tells the truth. As a Catholic, one has an obligation to attempt to convert friends and family members. Thus, if one is completely unaware of what his or her friend believes, then that person is not evangelizing the way he or she must evangelize. Therefore, let us all invite people to the marriage feast of our Lord as we have been bidden to do by Him! If we are satisfied that we have the faith, and are not zealous to spread it to others, how can we ever expect to be saved?

If you are able to do so, please make a donation in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to help us spread the Prophecies & Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden and the true Christian Faith all over the world to save our beloved brothers' and sisters' souls. To be able to reach this goal with your help, we need financial help to reach out to people, publish these books in different languages, and much more. We humbly ask you all to give from your abundance to help us save souls from the eternal hellfire. Your financial support could possibly make part of the difference where a person will spend eternity.

It is written: "And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42)

[We need your help, make a donation here please.](#)

We also need your prayers! We pray that God will bless you all and strengthen your spiritual life through his precious words found in the Revelations of St. Bridget!

More important information will be added soon!

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